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Community Experiences of Serious Organised Crime in Scotland

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Community Experiences of Serious Organised Crime in Scotland

Fraser, A., Hamilton-Smith, N., Clark, A., Atkinson, C., Graham, W. & McBride, M.

with Doyle, M. and Hobbs, D.

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Executive Summary

Overview

This summary sets out key findings from a research project that aimed to explore the community experiences of serious organised crime (SOC) in Scotland. The study sought to answer the following questions: 1) What are the relationships that exist between SOC and communities in Scotland? 2) What are the experiences and perceptions of residents, stakeholders and organisations of the scope and nature of SOC within their local area? and 3) How does SOC impact on community wellbeing, and to what extent can the harms associated with SOC be mitigated?

The work involved in-depth qualitative research, to understand both direct and indirect forms of harm. Key points pertaining to the research and its results are as follows:

- The study involved the selection of three community case study sites based on a typology of 'SOC-affected' communities. These sites were based in varying urban and semi-urban settings.
- The impact of SOC at a more 'diffuse' national level was explored via research in a range of smaller case study sites and via interviews with national stakeholders. This included a consideration of SOC impacts in rural and remote areas, and on populations that were not concentrated in any defined geographic community.
- The case study areas were selected on the basis of pre-existing academic and policy literature, an initial set of interviews with key experts, and on the basis of aggregated and anonymised intelligence summaries provided by Police Scotland.
- 188 individuals participated in the study, which mostly involved semi-structured qualitative interviews, but also a small number of focus groups, unstructured interviews and observational research.
- Interviews were conducted with residents, local businesses, service providers, community groups, and national organisations, as well as with a small number of individuals with lived experience of SOC.
- Interviews comprised of questions about: the relationship between SOC and communities; the experiences and perceptions of residents and local service providers as to the nature and extent of SOC; and the impact of SOC on community wellbeing.
- Preliminary findings were presented back to a sub-sample of 33 community residents and representatives, across three of the case study areas, through a feedback method called 'co-inquiry'. This involved the organisation of events designed to assess the integrity of the findings, and elicit reflections on the implications of the findings for potential actions.

Key Findings

Serious Organised crime in Scotland

SOC is considered to have a significant impact on the wellbeing of Scottish communities. As well as economic costs, it is evident that there are broader social costs in community settings.

The effects of SOC on Scottish communities are not evenly distributed, with impact varying in nature and severity across urban, semi-urban and rural areas. While certain forms of SOC have deep roots in territorially-defined communities, others have less visible and more diffuse and invisible forms of impact. In recent years SOC in Scotland has demonstrated both continuity and change, involving both neighbourhood-based criminality and more geographically diverse forms of activity.

The case study areas had all experienced the consequences of the decline in Scotland's traditional industries, including coal-mining, fishing, and manufacturing. All could be characterised as experiencing significant social and economic disadvantage, with unemployment and underemployment a common concern. Participants identified poverty and inequality as key drivers of crime in their local areas, including SOC activity.

While the case study areas had traits that were similar to other communities in Scotland, however, it should be noted that these findings should not be read as a generalised picture of SOC-community relations in Scotland. While these themes were evident across the various case study locations, it is notable that there were differences in intensity between urban, semi-urban, and rural contexts. The intensity was highest in the urban embedded context and least intense in the diffuse location.

Community experiences

Criminal activity and impacts

Across all fieldsites, participants recognised organised crime as a significant and enduring feature of the local landscape. In each area, there were local firms, families and 'faces' who were seen to have involvement in organised criminality. 'Organised' crime frequently featured as a relatively routine aspect of everyday life that was recognised, to a greater or lesser extent, by a majority of participants.

Participants in all fieldsites identified street crime – notably drug dealing and theft – as the most visible manifestation of organised criminality. It was often

recognised, however, that these visible forms of crime were the 'tip of the iceberg', with the majority of SOC activity hidden from public view.

There was consensus that the principal community impact of SOC in Scotland continues to result from the illicit drugs market. The illicit drugs market embeds a range of harmful consequences for users, their families, and the general fabric of community life, including the entrenchment of vulnerabilities such as addiction and debt.

For communities where SOC is deeply embedded, the cumulative effect of its presence can result in a degree of resignation to its impact. Fear and violence form part of the background to everyday life.

Outside of these very direct community impacts, SOC has clear economic, cultural and social consequences within Scottish society more broadly; in particular through the harmful and pernicious effects of criminal markets in illicit drugs, stolen property, and human exploitation.

Organised crime – exploitation, recruitment and supporting 'narratives'

Organised crime groups often have detailed knowledge of vulnerability in local areas. Groups seek opportunities to create financial gain from exploiting or recruiting (frequently vulnerable) individuals. Weaknesses in welfare provision and in the provision of essential services such as shortfalls in housing benefit, or forms of welfare sanction, were found to be readily identified and exploited by SOC groups.

Exploitation of community groups also extends to more diffuse forms of SOC. Participants reported forms of exploitation across a range of legal and illegal enterprises (e.g. hospitality, fishing, agriculture, nail bars, prostitution, and cannabis cultivation). Precarious migrants were particularly vulnerable to exploitation in these enterprises.

Youths hanging around in public areas were a community concern across all fieldsites, specifically when they were involved in anti-social behaviour and street crime. In some cases young people from this cohort are understood to be 'mentored' towards involvement in more organised forms of criminality.

Although territorial identity remains significant, community respondents reported that street-based gang violence had declined in visibility and severity in recent years. A number of explanations were offered for this, including the growth of social media-facilitated drug dealing.

In the context of unemployment, precarious work, and zero-hours contracts, organised crime was seen as offering a route to financial reward that was very appealing to some young people, particularly young men in search of respect.

Organised crime was portrayed as a meritocratic, 'equal opportunity' employer where able young people could find both success, and a sense of belonging, that they were denied in the legitimate economy.

To a significant extent 'positive' narratives and perceptions of SOC represented a mismatch with reality. In fact, the prospects for youth getting involved in organised crime is bleak, with few achieving sustained material success without detriment. Involvement comes with a persistent threat of imprisonment or, when at liberty, a constant threat of violence.

Service providers

The study engaged in interview-based data-collection with local police and statutory agencies, including social work, housing, and schools. This data was used to triangulate the findings from community interviews and explore the barriers to service provision in case-study areas.

Statutory agencies and their partners face considerable challenges in the provision of services and supporting the needs of communities. Against this backdrop the presence of SOC constitutes a barrier to effective and equitable service delivery, both 'blocking' and 'distracting' scant resources.

Across all case study sites a decade of austerity and budget cuts has clearly eroded the capacity of service providers. In particular this has led to office closures in the majority of case study sites, resulting in a 'distancing' between organisations and residents, and an associated loss of community knowledge. The presence of embedded SOC activity in a local area can create further distance between communities and service providers through the fear of reporting crime.

The increased mobility and inter-connectedness of SOC, promoted by improved travel infrastructure and the global reach of online and social media technologies, creates particular challenges for local statutory partners, who may not have ready access to the central resources and capabilities required to deal with highly mobile and/or technology-enabled criminality.

Issues for the main service providers / agencies are summarised as follows:

Community policing has relatively weak purchase on SOC issues in the case study areas. Police community relationships were generally seen as poor, being characterised by high levels of mistrust. In some communities these poor relationships were considered long-standing and often inter-generational.The effectiveness and credibility of local policing generally was further challenged by strategies used by SOC groups to foil police operations, and efforts to deliberately divert police resources away from SOC activity through reporting of bogus 'incidents'.

Schools are seen as a key asset in communities but also a potential problem when pupils are disengaged from school and at risk of school 'drop out' and subsequent involvement in crime. Drug dealing around schools, often facilitated by social media, was seen as a problem in a number of areas.

Housing is also considered to be a significant asset in communities, with local providers commanding more trust in communities than many other agencies. Exploitation of vulnerable tenants was identified as a significant concern across the fieldsites, with some providers offering innovative new approaches for identifying and supporting vulnerable populations.

Private businesses and retail premises did not feature significantly in case study areas, which were generally characterised by weak commercial environments. In one area this had enabled SOC groups to gain some purchase on the community through providing services and facilities. In this area SOC had also been associated with intimidation and the prevention of other, legitimate businesses, from setting up in the area. This combined, with the stigma associated with negative area reputation, could partially contribute to the sustained levels of socio-economic exclusion experienced within these communities.

Social work and related organisations face substantial challenges in supporting desistance and reintegration for individuals convicted of SOC offences. Whilst some individuals with backgrounds of offending are anxious to escape from their criminal associations, this can be difficult in circumstances where SOC groups are not prepared to let them 'walk away'. Supporting these individuals through the provision of appropriate housing, medical care, and employment is a particular challenge in a resource-stretched environment.

Fig 1. Services providers: Summary of key points in case study areas

Recommendations

Developing Resilient Communities

- The current Scottish Government SOC strategy is framed by four strategic principles: Divert, Deter, Detect and Disrupt. This study recommends the addition of a fifth D – Develop – which is premised on community development as a means of responding to the harms associated with organised crime. Specifically, this should focus on developing community resources and local policing models to enable the gathering of community intelligence and increased trust in the police and other key service providers.
- Community development should not be premised on tackling organised crime being a panacea to a community's problems, but it is based on the assertion that efforts to tackle bigger issues of structural disadvantage are liable to fail if the barrier of organised crime is not tackled in parallel.

- This approach recognises that the best asset in responding to organised crime is the community itself. Individuals involved in harmful, exploitative or coercive practices are deeply intertwined with the majority of law abiding residents via families, friendships and other social connections. The implications of this should be further explored and help to frame prevention, policing and other responses which balance building opportunities for all in communities with rehabilitation and social support.
- This cannot be achieved without corresponding investment in good place-based empowerment and planning, something which is understood in policy terms but often not accompanied by economic investment. This study suggests that grassroots, community-level resistance should be prioritised rather than it being led from outside the community. Organised crime cannot, and should not, be a dominant theme in community conversations and planning, but neither should the conversation be avoided through an exclusive focus on more positive 'assets'.

Changing the Narrative

- At a national level, challenging the narrative of organised crime demands two shifts: first, a shift in presenting the issue as the preserve of law enforcement to one for the community at large; and, second, a shift in presenting organised crime as solely an issue for socially and economically disadvantaged communities to one that extends its reach to all areas of society, including those affluent communities where many 'successful' organised criminals reside.
- At a community level, effectively challenging the organised crime narrative requires investment in a coherent, authentic and effectively targeted counter-narrative. This is likely to involve work which gathers the stories of those involved, maps these against more accurate real-world consequences and seeks to profile and share them as a preventative strategy, in face to face contexts such as in schools and through other means such as social media.
- At an individual level, work with convicted offenders and young people and individuals on the cusp of organised crime should emphasise the distance between myth and reality in the narrative of organised crime at key transition points. As opposed to supporting the narrative of flash cars and ready cash, these ideas should be challenged to create alternative and authentic stories – involving individuals with lived experience of SOC – that make sense to young people. Services such as diversionary youth work also need to be sustainably funded, credible and sufficiently attractive to provide a real alternative to what can be exciting experiences linked to SOC.

Addressing Vulnerability

- Local service providers dealing with various forms of vulnerability – particularly housing and social work – should develop strategies focused on the prevention of exploitation of vulnerable residents. Mapping and targeting support to the most vulnerable is a viable strategy with the potential to create a significant prevention dividend. Partnership working and information-sharing on the issue of vulnerability and exploitation should form a key part of this strategy.

- Consideration should be given to legislative responses to create greater powers to respond to exploitation. One possible route would be to create a criminal offence of 'coercive control' similar to the recent UK legislation (2015: 3) on domestic violence: 'a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.'
- The current focus on harm reduction and health education in drugs policy and practice is welcome but needs to be strengthened and broadened out to take proper stock of rapidly diversifying drug markets and drug using populations.
- Given uncertainties in the current political and economic environment, and how this may impact on existing migrant populations in Scotland in the near future, careful monitoring is required of labour markets given the scope for exploitation of migrants to increase if labour shortages grow after the UK's probable departure from the European Union.

Broadening Community Partnership

- A broad-based police, community and statutory partnership approach to SOC is required to enable the development of cohesive forms of intervention and responses. A key focus of this work should involve developing partnerships with families, mentors, and schools, and should involve sufficient investment in preventative services, particularly in community and campus policing models, as key facilitators and organisers.
- Preventing SOC and mitigating its effects requires good universal service provision, most notably education and youth work. This package of embedded response requires an enduring infrastructure including physical focal points like community spaces, services mitigating social exclusion and poverty, and processes for empowerment and dialogue.
- Improved partnership working and information sharing should be prioritised, with SOC acting as a 'red thread' that connects local service provision. Improving links between community justice and other community planning solutions could involve integrating locality planning with services such as employability, work with ex-offenders, and services dealing with addiction or mental health. These partnerships should prioritise genuinely shared organisational objectives to incentivise joined up practice.
- A key part of achieving joined-up practice must include continuing to develop more effective models of working, between national resources configured to tackle organised crime (i.e. partner agencies co-located at the Scottish Crime Campus (SCC) at Gartcosh) and more local service providers. Operations by national agencies should not be developed or implemented in isolation from consideration of community plans and impacts.

Acknowledgements

1. Definitions, background and context

Overview

Serious organised crime (SOC) has a significant impact on the social and economic wellbeing of Scottish communities. SOC is estimated to cost the Scottish economy up to £2 billion annually (Scottish Police Authority 2013), and results in a number of harms to local communities.

To date, SOC has largely been approached as a policing issue, particulary involving specialist units and covert tactics. As a result, there are significant gaps in knowledge relating to the broader community experiences of organised crime. The community experience of SOC therefore represents a key gap in knowledge in the formulation of effective social policy that seeks to challenge both the direct and indirect forms of associated harm in Scottish society.

This document reports the findings of the first in-depth study undertaken to explore community experiences of organised crime in Scotland. The study aimed to move beyond the prevailing perceptions of police and law enforcement and instead engage with a wider range of voices drawn from communities with an established SOC presence. The report provides information relating to the nature and extent of the impacts of SOC on everyday life in the community, as well as identifying gaps in knowledge and offering suggestions for future policy.

The current chapter provides background and context for the study, covering: definitions and policy context; background and literature; organised crime in Scotland; and the structure of the report. Subsequent chapters will introduce the methods, data and findings of the study.

Definitions and policy context

Definition of the term 'organised crime' is subject to wide-ranging debate (e.g. Maltz 1976; Hagan 2006). A recent overview determined more than a hundred different definitions, with variations between academic, policy and law-enforcement approaches (von Lampe 2015). Organised crime is also a topic that is subject to a great deal of public interest and stereotype, and at times glamorisation in popular culture (Penfold 2004; Levi 2008).

Issues commonly associated with organised crime are the existence of hierarchy, continuity, violence, restricted membership, illegal enterprises, penetration of legitimate business, and corruption (Finckenaeur 2005). Debates focus on the distinction between youth gangs (Hagedorn 2015), 'mafia-style' organisations (Varese 2010), and other forms of organised crime (Wright 2006).

Scholars have however also emphasised the idea of 'disorganised' crime (Ruggiero and South 1997; Hobbs 2001). As opposed to a coherent hierarchy, this approach

considers shifting alliances between criminal actors who form networks according to evolving opportunities alongside familial or cultural connections (Hobbs 1998). Recently, approaches have emphasised connections between local markets and transnational aspects of organised crime (Varese 2013; Marmo and Chazal 2016).

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime defines an organised criminal group as 'a structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences established in accordance with this Convention, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit' (United Nations 2004: 5).

In 2015, the Scottish Government reoriented the policy focus toward serious organised crime which: (a) involves more than one person; (b) is organised (i.e. involves planning or the use of specialist resources); (c) causes (or has the potential to cause), significant harm; and (d) involves some benefit, financial or otherwise, to the individuals involved (Scottish Government 2015a). The current Serious Organised Crime Strategy focuses on four principal strands: Divert, Deter, Detect and Disrupt. This classification represents an effort to emphasise the role of other statutory agencies and community organisations in responding to the harms associated with organised crime.

In this report the term 'organised crime' is used generally to refer to planned, group-based criminality with significant financial reward. While the terms 'organised crime' and 'serious organised crime' (SOC) are used interchangeably in the report, it is notable that the term 'organised crime' had more traction with community respondents, while the term SOC was more familiar to statutory interviewees. In both cases, however, the terminology was left open to interpretation.

A recent overview of research on the concept of 'community' distinguished three components of a definition: (a) a social group who interact on a regular basis; (b) often within a closed geographical area; (c) involving some degree of commonality of values or interests (Neal and Neal 2014).

These components are subject to intense debate. Sociological approaches to the concept of 'community' stress its partial, contingent and constructed nature (Sibley 1995; Delanty 2010). While the idea might conjure an 'image of a *warm* and comfortable place' (Bauman 2001: 1), in reality the construction of community frequently results in exclusion, as well as disputed boundaries (Elias and Scotstoun 1994; Back 1996). It is therefore recognised that there can be multiple 'communities' co-existing within the same neighbourhood, as well as those that form and sustain across long distances, including 'virtual' communities (Delanty 2010).

In 2015, the Scottish Government introduced the Community Empowerment Act which defined communities as 'any community based on common interest, identity

or geography' (Scottish Government 2015b). In this report, the term 'community' will be used according to this broad definition, with a particular emphasis on geography.

Background and literature

Criminological research on community experiences of crime has traditionally focused on the idea of the 'criminal area' (Morris 1957: 9; Rock 1973: 30). Reiss (1986) coined the term 'community crime careers', focusing on the ways in which an area may sustain or support pro-criminal tendencies. In recent research in Scotland which has illustrated how 'high crime' areas are not only associated with more established offender residences than other areas, but also with the production of higher levels of new offending groups (Livingston et. al. 2014). It is notable however that criminality can also cluster in more affluent communities (Lashmar and Hobbs 2017).

Local communities can provide a known set of resources and 'recruits' for SOC groups, as well as a ready market for goods and services. In this context, reputation, social ties, and access to specialist resources define the successful 'project criminal' (Klerks 1999; Von Lampe and Johansen 2004). The denser and more flexible these resources and networks are, the more resilient SOC can be to any law enforcement activity (Cope and Kazmierska 2006).

Up until the 1990s, criminal entrepreneurialism was categorised as 'professional' rather than 'organised' crime, where criminal actors were presented as those who had learned their trade like 'physicians, lawyers or bricklayers' (Sutherland 1937). This does not suggest large-scale organisation, so much as 'a community of small operators' (Low 1982) or an 'everyman performance' (Hobbs 2013).

Research on organised crime careers (Van Koppen et. al. 2010; Francis et. al. 2013) suggests that the presence of criminal opportunities in marginalised communities may offer alternative career opportunities. Such opportunities can be compared to those that in more affluent communities may be associated with success in the legitimate economy (Kleemans and de Poot 2008). Less serious criminal networks in a community, in particular youth gangs, can provide a training ground for offenders to develop criminal capital (Hagan 1997).

Research has established that area reputation, stigma, socio-economic exclusion, and under-investment can strengthen and sustain criminal traditions within communities (Bottoms 1994). Such factors also increase the likelihood that residents will perceive their neighbourhood as having a problem with organised crime (Tilley and Hopkins 2008; Ipsos MORI Scotland 2013). Such reputations can create a self-fulfilling prophecy that has implications both for how residents feel about themselves and their community, but also for how external service providers view the area.

A general perception that organised crime is present, or is an issue, in a community, *does not* necessarily equate to having an experience of it. Attempts to measure community experiences and perceptions to date have repeatedly found that most residents, and indeed most local businesses, do not recognise or associate the

majority of visible crimes that they witness or experience, with organised crime (Tilley and Hopkins 2008; Bullock et. al. 2009; Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie 2011; Ipsos MORI Scotland 2018).

Research has further demonstrated that community wellbeing and feelings of safety and belonging can be negatively impacted by certain types of crime and incivilities, which to the community at large can signal 'disorder', 'insecurity' and a lack of community 'control' (Innes 2004). When low-level concerns are mapped against police intelligence, however, there can be a strong correspondence with organised crime activity (Hamilton-Smith and Mackenzie 2011). A recent report found that 17% of police recorded crime was linked to organised crime, mostly involving drug-related offences, vehicle crime, and fraud (Crocker *et. al.* 2017).

SOC groups may launder profits in the form of cheap 'self-loans'; for instance, setting up local firms and services with low-capital costs, thereby in turn undercutting legitimate local entrepreneurs and businesses (Murray 2010). Similarly, the accumulation of criminal capital under otherwise legitimate guises by SOC poses an ongoing threat to the integrity of economic markets (Murray 2018). The net impact of this form of activity may re-enforce economic marginalisation and a low-skill, low-wage economy in deprived areas.

It is important to recognise that community resources can also mobilise forms of resistance and resilience to the harms associated with SOC. Even in instances where two proximate communities share many similar characteristics, they can nevertheless exhibit distinctly different trajectories when it comes to offending and crime (Baldwin and Bottoms 1976). Evidence shows that even where there are high crime/high offender communities, most are overwhelmingly populated by law-abiding citizens (Stark 1987). Additionally, research indicates that even among those citizens who engage in some criminality, many will still mostly be characterised as having conventional aspirations and a limited attachment to any criminal identity (Hobbs 2013). Recent research carried out in Scotland (Seaman et. al. 2015) has suggested that cohesion and resilience can promote community wellbeing, health and longevity.

Organised crime in Scotland

Historical research suggests that group-based criminality of an organised, entrepreneurial nature in Scotland dates back at least to the 1920s (Davies 2013). In neighbourhoods characterised by severe poverty, illegal forms of money-making – from protection rackets to organised theft, illicit drinking 'shebeens' to money-lending – formed an aspect of everyday life that enabled communities to survive during times of economic hardship (Damer 1990). Urban centres with major ports represented important points in stolen goods networks, and cities such as Glasgow supplied larger conurbations such as London.

Markets in high value goods such as cigarettes and whisky were established during the rationing of the Second World War, and in the 1950s professional criminals

started to build individual reputations both inside and outside of Scotland. From the 1960s onward these localised activities developed into more organised, cohesive criminal associations that extended beyond the immediate locale. Particularly in Glasgow, organised crime came to be associated with crime 'families' and 'firms' with bases in particular urban communities (Wilson and Findlay 2012; Findlay 2012).

Autobiographical accounts from the 1970s onward depict a relatively consistent picture of organised crime, in which known families came to represent an embedded, normalised, and mundane aspect of daily life in urban communities experiencing severe, long-term and multiple disadvantage (Boyle 1977). In these accounts, local crime firms represent a longstanding and visible presence in the community, operating as an alternative form of local governance, fulfilling functions such as money-lending, debt-collection, dispute-resolution, and protection.

In this context, reputations for violence could lead to opportunities for employment in the illicit economy (Davies 2013). Territorial youth gangs formed part of the same street culture that more organised criminal enterprise grew out of, and in some cases provided a pathway into more organised forms of criminality (Fraser 2015). In the context of de-industrialisation – including the decline in manufacturing and the embedding of long-term unemployment – local crime firms represented a source of employment, income and status.

SOC presence remains strongly rooted in de-industrialised urban and semi-urban neighbourhoods, particularly in the west of Scotland. A SOC mapping exercise carried out in 2016 found that of the groups operating in Scotland, 65% were located in the west of Scotland, 21% in the east and 14% in the north (Scottish Government 2017b). The majority of these groups were identified as ethnically White Scottish, with approximately 6% foreign nationals. There is nonetheless a need to be aware of the different forms of exploitation and vulnerability between Scottish groups and those based elsewhere.

New supply routes and the increasing involvement of organised groups from outside of Scotland indicate the ways in which the market for illicit goods and services is adapting and transforming. For example, in 2007 a high-profile individual was convicted of laundering £1m generated through trafficking heroin and cocaine after a four year surveillance operation by the police in Scotland which led them over time to expand their observations to the Netherlands, Spain, and Portugal.

While 'elite' organised crime actors may be transnational in activity and scope, they form part of domestic networks that extend down to more localised groups. A recent study of offending patterns of individuals identified by the police as being involved in SOC (Scottish Government 2017a) demonstrated that the majority (54%) were recorded as unemployed and resided in the most deprived communities in the country, with 2% based in least deprived areas.

A 2016 threat assessment from the agencies co-located at the Scottish Crime Campus suggested that the principal areas of concern are: drug supply and distribution; acquisitive crime; counterfeiting; immigration crime; environmental crime; fraud; extortion; cybercrime; human trafficking; and child sexual exploitation. A survey of public perceptions of SOC in Scotland (Ipsos Mori 2018) indicated that the main perceptions of the impact of organised crime were broader than these issues, incorporating not only drug taking or increased drug use (28%) but also fear in the community (23%), damage to victims' health (18%), a reduction in money for public services (13%), and violence in the community (12%).

The survey showed that the majority of respondents, almost seven in every ten (67%), did not think that organised crime was a problem in their area, with 30% saying it was very or fairly serious. However, for people living in the most deprived areas over half (57%) regarded it as a serious problem, compared to 15% of people in the least deprived areas (Scottish Government 2018a: 11). Based on a sample of 1,088 people, the study showed that only one in ten had personally been affected by SOC; the majority of whom, (74%), said they had been victims (Scottish Government 2018a).

A recent review of research by the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice (CYCJ 2018) has demonstrated that there are a range of risk factors for young people being recruited into organised criminal activity. Findings highlight a range of ways in which vulnerable young people can be 'mentored' into criminal activity by adults. Although some of these risk factors were similar to that involving participation in other forms of offending, there were issues that were particular to SOC activity. In Scotland, one of these factors is consistent involvement with social work services from a young age.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the background and context for the study. It introduced broad definitions of the terms 'organised crime' and 'community', drawing attention to the role of 'disorganised' crime and the fact that many 'communities' may co-exist in the same geographical area. The chapter then discussed previous academic studies on the topic of communities and organised crime, demonstrating a range of reasons why organised crime groups might wish to establish a base of operations within a community context, while also noting the divergence between 'seen' and 'unseen' forms of organised crime.

To date, there has been no dedicated effort to recognise and understand the direct and indirect impacts of organised crime on local communities. The chapter also offered a brief overview of the history and context of organised crime in Scotland, drawing on academic and policy literature, to contextualise the study. This overview suggests that while organised crime remains rooted in specific community contexts, there is a need to consider the more diffuse impacts that organised crime might have at a national level.

2. Methods, research design and data

This chapter details the research design and methodological issues involved in an 18-month study of the community impact of SOC in Scotland. The study is unique in that it sought to move beyond police and law enforcement perceptions of organised crime to engage a range of community voices including young people, older adults, local residents and business owners, as well as representatives of local charities, groups and organisations.

The study focused on three geographical sites with an enduring presence of organised crime, as well as two smaller studies involving more diffuse and rural communities. While the report prioritises the lived experiences of a cross-section of local residents, the study also engaged in separate data-collection with local police and statutory agencies, including social work, housing, and education. This data was used to enrich the findings from community interviews and explore the barriers to service provision in the case-study areas.

This chapter introduces the research design, including a discussion of methods; discusses the typology used to specify differences between the case-study areas; and outlines issues relating to sampling, limitations, and ethics.

Research Design

The study sought to provide, for the first time, focused qualitative research on the community experiences of organised crime in Scotland, from individuals who may have an awareness of SOC in their communities and been affected by it, either directly or indirectly. The study therefore aimed to provide policy-makers, statutory agencies, service providers, partner agencies, and other relevant stakeholders with a richer understanding of the direct and indirect harms associated with SOC. The study sought to answer the following questions and proceeded in three stages:

- What are the relationships that exist between SOC and communities in Scotland?
- What are the experiences and perceptions of residents, stakeholders and organisations of the extent and nature of SOC within their local area?
- How does SOC impact on community wellbeing, and to what extent can the harms associated with SOC be mitigated?

Stage 1: Mapping, scoping and site-selection

The first stage involved a period of mapping of communities with enduring experiences of organised crime to inform site-selection. Fourteen interviews were completed with a range of stakeholders assessed as holding expertise or insight in this area, including police, statutory agencies, and third sector organisations. These interviews were supplemented by an analysis of open-source documentation

pertaining to organised crime in Scotland to establish a set of profiles and protocols for potential fieldsites.

These profiles were compared with 'sanitised' intelligence from Police Scotland pertaining to their assessment of the SOC 'footprint' in Scottish communities, as well as analyses conducted by colleagues in the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) as to the potential access routes within the areas. The final site selection was therefore based on expert interviews, area profiles, police intelligence, and existing community networks (further detail is provided on case study typologies at the end of the chapter).

Stage 2: Case study fieldwork

The second stage of the study involved further qualitative interviews, focus groups, and observations in the case-study sites, conducted between February and November 2017. Case study research took place under two parallel streams, with data collected from community residents and other agencies using different research teams. This strategy was designed to protect the anonymity of participants, enhance confidentiality of data, and minimise harm; to promote methodological rigour; and to prioritise community experiences.

For community fieldwork, access strategies drew on the expertise and networks of SCDC, an agency that has established community relations with over 700 organisations across Scotland. Sampling strategies sought to engage a cross-section of local residents, including young people, local organisations and business owners, as well as individuals with lived experience of SOC. Interviews covered themes including: perceptions of community; meanings associated with 'organised' crime; experiences of victimisation and/or crime; and changes over time.

A total of 84 community participants from the case study areas engaged with the study across the case-study locations, including 66 individual interviews and 18 focus group participants. All respondents were given general information about the project before the interviews were arranged. The interviews were conducted using a thematic interview template, rather than a structured schedule of questions. The questioning changed across interviews and between fieldsites based on the respondent, their experiences and their communities. The interviews took place in the premises of local charities, cafes, and offices, with three interviews taking place as 'walking' interviews around the local area (Kusenbach 2003) to gain a physical sense of the landscape of SOC in the local area.

Five focus groups were conducted with 16 young people and two teachers across three secondary schools in the case-study locations. Headteachers were given full details of the research project in advance, followed by an initial meeting with a member of the research team to address any questions. Students participated voluntarily, with teachers assisting with invitation and facilitation. The sample included those known to have familiarity with SOC and others who didn't.

Table 1.1, below, details the demographic profile of community participants.

Table 1.1: Demographic profile of community participants

Fieldsite	M	F	< 18	18-30	31-50	51-75	TOTAL
Site 1	10	14	2	4	13	5	24
Site 2	10	11	9	4	4	4	21
Site 3	10	14	5	3	10	6	24
Site 4*	3	12	0	4	10	1	15
TOTALS	33	51	16	15	37	16	84

*Site 4 involved fieldwork in two 'mini' case-study sites.

In addition, informal interviews and observations were conducted in twelve local business premises across the case-study locations. Drawing on an established Home Office methodology (Tilley and Hopkins 2008), interviews took place outside peak business hours and involved note-taking rather than recording. Businesses available for approach were identified visually, and approaches were largely opportunistic, based on a mix of cold-calling businesses that were open and following-up pre-existing contacts made through the broader community fieldwork. These interviews explored the positive and negative features of doing business in the local area, feelings of security, instances of victimisation, relationships with local service providers, and perceptions of organised crime. Demographic details were not recorded for reasons of anonymity.

For fieldwork with police and other agencies, access strategies relied on arrangements agreed between the Scottish Government and relevant statutory agencies. Memoranda of understanding were signed with relevant heads of service, although in some cases access was negotiated through local representatives. Sampling strategies focused on engaging with key contacts for the relevant fieldsite, focusing on individuals with front-line experience as well as with regional oversight. A total of 52 interviews were conducted with representatives of: police (20), social work (10), housing (10), local authorities/third sector (8), and other statutory agencies (4). Interview themes covered: the nature and patterning of organised crime; changes over time; forms of intervention; and success and failure.

Stage 3: Triangulation and additional sampling

The third stage of the study involved additional sampling and triangulation. Through a data calibration exercise two gaps were identified: 1) individuals with lived experience of organised crime; and 2) community and statutory agency perspectives on organised crime of a more diffuse nature. In response, two further periods of data-collection were undertaken.

The first involved interviews and focus groups with individuals with lived experience of organised crime in Scotland. Two interviews were conducted through referrals, while the remaining ten were engaged through focus groups in the Scottish prison estate, through assistance from the study's Research Advisory Group. Participants were involved in a programme focusing on offending behaviour and participated voluntarily. Discussions focused on participants' experiences of organised crime in

their local area, as both victims and perpetrators, principally pertaining to the local drugs trade but also to theft and violence. Discussions were not recorded but written up as fieldnotes immediately after.

The second involved fourteen interviews with individuals and organisations engaged in issues of SOC of a national, diffuse nature. Interviews were conducted with a range of third sector and statutory agencies working on issues of labour exploitation and human trafficking, particularly among migrant communities, at a national level.

Table 1.2, below, offers an overview of the various stages of data-collection.

Table 1.2: Overview of data-collection

Stage	Participant Group	Site 1 *Type 1*	Site 2 *Type 1*	Site 3 *Type 2*	Site 4* *Type 3*	National	Total
1	Expert interviews					14	14
2	Community participants	24	21	24	15		84
	Business participants	5		4	3		12
	Statutory participants	20	13	7	12		52
3	People with lived experience of SOC					12	12
	Stakeholders in diffuse SOC					14	14
	Total	49	34	35	30	40	188

*Site 4 involved fieldwork in two 'mini' case-study sites.

Stage 4: Data analysis and community co-inquiry

The final stage of the study involved qualitative data analysis and the presentation of emerging findings to a sub-sample of participants, using a method called 'community co-inquiry.'

Data analysis occurred over several stages. In line with established protocols, interviews and focus groups were transcribed *verbatim*, in full or part, and analysed based on a number of 'sensitising concepts' (Willis 2000) flowing from the research questions, while also drawing on the principles of 'analytic realism' (Altheide and Johnson 1998). A combination of analytical techniques, including use of the qualitative software Nvivo, was used to organise the data. The analytical themes which emerged were used to order and structure the presentation of the data.

Based on initial findings from this analysis, in February 2018 colleagues from SCDC led on the design and delivery of three community 'co-inquiry' events in the case-study locations. These events re-engaged a sub-sample of 33 community participants to discuss preliminary findings from the report, including study participants and local community stakeholders, with the aim of generating strategies for community action and response. The co-inquiry method offers an opportunity for participating communities to feed back on the emerging findings.

Co-inquiry events involved a two-stage process. First, participants were presented with an accessible overview of findings and asked to discuss the extent to which these did or did not resonate with their experiences. Second, participants were asked to explore suggestions for shifts in practice, policy or community responses that could help prevent crime, tackle its social determinants, or help communities deal with its impact (a detailed methodology and findings for these events are included as an appendix to this report). These events informed the final stage of data analysis that informed the final conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Case-study typology

Drawing from the work of Von Lampe (2004), the study used a three-point typology to explore the community impact of organised crime: (1) urban, embedded; (2) semi-urban, embedded; and (3) national, diffuse.

Type 1. Urban, embedded

Type 1 relations are defined by the longstanding presence of organised crime groups in a local area, within which the illicit marketplace represents an embedded aspect of community activity. Individuals, groups, and families known to be linked to organised crime are part of the background to everyday life, and ongoing disputes form a topic of neighbourhood lore. Activities range from licit to illicit markets but focus on exploitation of vulnerabilities and the supply of illicit products and services. Examples include the illicit drug trade, private security, money-lending, and fraud. These 'urban, embedded' relations are found in cities across Scotland.

Fieldwork was conducted in two type 1 communities, (site 1 and site 2). The communities identified as type 1 contained datazones within the top 25% of deprivation in the 2016 Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), with several in the top 5%. Both sites experienced long-term social and economic disadvantage, connected to the decline of Scottish manufacturing industries. The sites in question were also assessed by Police Scotland as indicating a 'significant' or 'very significant' organised crime footprint.

In both areas, the presence of organised crime was understood as a normal and routine aspect of everyday life. Whilst only a minority of respondents had been directly victimised, the vast majority of community respondents were aware of the broader effects of organised crime in their areas, and the ways in which such activity impacted on their day-to-day lives, eroded their sense of safety, and damaged the future prospects of the community as a whole.

Type 2. Semi-urban, embedded

Type 2 relations pertain to semi-urban contexts, involving defined clusters of villages and/or towns within short commuting distance of larger cities, yet exhibiting independent geographical and economic life. These communities are, by and large, founded on former manufacturing industries, particularly coal-mining, steel mills, or cotton and jute industries, and have suffered from long-term decline as a result of de-industrialisation. These clustered communities are particularly common in the central belt and west coast of Scotland. Case-study fieldwork was conducted in one geographical area in this category, listed as site 3 in the report.

Given its semi-urban context, this case-study fieldsite extended beyond a single locality to incorporate a number of adjacent areas, including those assessed by the police as indicating a 'negligible' and 'significant' organised crime footprint respectively, reflecting differences in the social, economic and cultural history of the areas. These assessments were also borne out by local observations; one area in particular had a strong association with crime and drug use, echoing similar 'area reputations' in the larger cities. It is notable that these pockets were also those identified by police as containing a more 'significant' SOC presence.

The case-study fieldsite was composed of a relatively static local population, and the organised crime presence was more static than in type 1 communities. While the illicit goods traded were similar, the market was less lucrative and competitive than in larger urban conurbations. As opposed to type 1 communities, where large crime 'families' and firms were the norm, in type 2 communities it was more common to find a smaller number of 'known' individuals responsible for SOC in the area. In the case-study area, for example, frequent mention was made of a local figure who owned all of the local businesses engaged in SOC activity.

Type 3. National, diffuse

Type 3 relations are not defined by a single community base but rather by more flexible, mobile and hidden networks of vulnerability and exploitation. This often involves SOC groups with territorial bases elsewhere, for example from England or abroad, with illicit activities coordinated through brokers and networks. Fieldwork was carried out in two 'mini' case-study sites, supplemented by national-level interviews. 'Diffuse' activities focused on first: flexible and mobile forms of drug supply, and second: economic exploitation, such as human trafficking and labour exploitation.

The first of these activies relates to locations where there is no historical organised crime presence but where there is nonetheless a market for drugs and illicit goods. In this circumstance, groups from elsewhere establish a flexible route to supply the market, most commonly drugs or exploitation. SOC groups may bypass the central belt of Scotland and trace back to networks in England, or operate as 'spokes' from the hubs of Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. This pattern was particularly noted in semi-urban and rural contexts across the north east of Scotland.

The second form of activity identified pertains to SOC groups without a strong territorial base, but strong UK-wide networks, creating specific opportunities for

exploitation. These forms of exploitation were seen to impact specifically on migrant communities, particularly those with precarious visa arrangements. Such exploitation particularly occurred in cash industries with weak regulation, such as car washes and nail bars, but also in more organised business ventures such as factories and restaurants.

Fig 2: Summary of case study typology
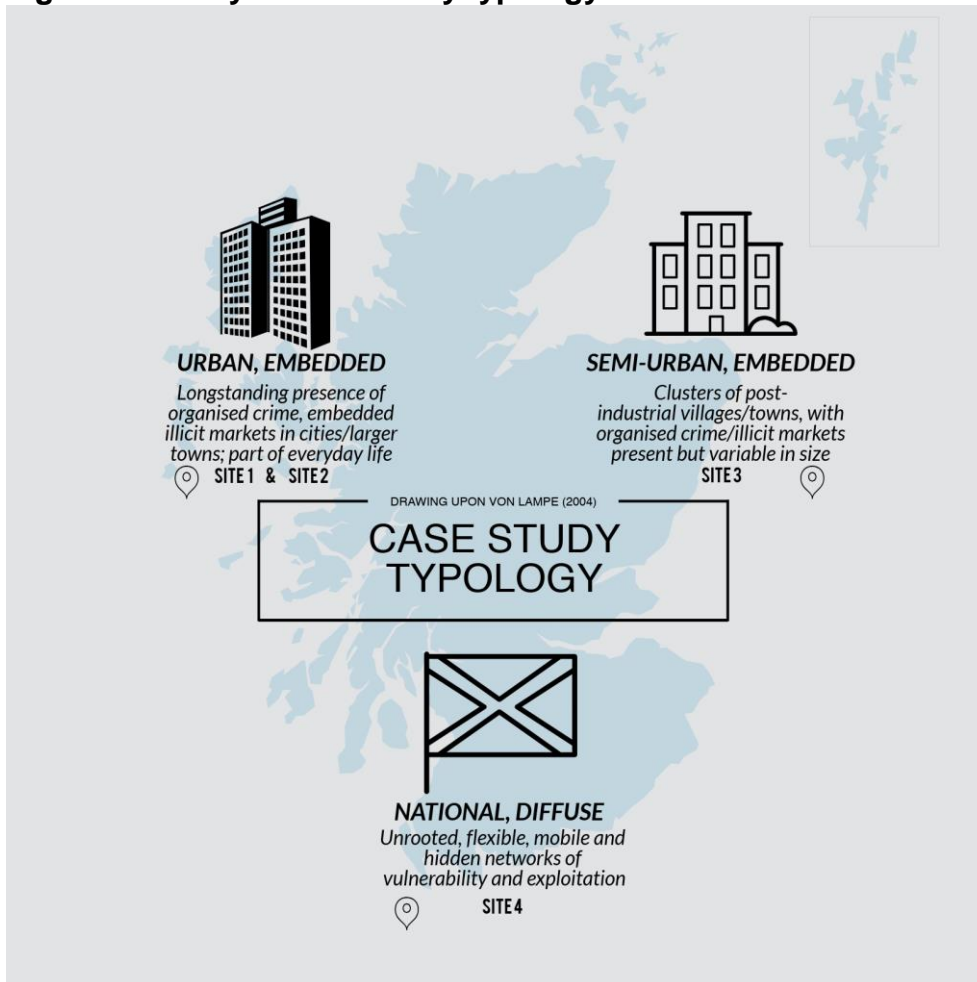
Sampling, limitations and ethical issues

Given the qualitative nature of the inquiry, participants were selected on the basis of a range of knowledge and experience of organised crime, rather than sampled characteristics such as age, gender or ethnicity. Nonetheless, effort was made to capture a diverse sample of participants by age and gender.

Participants were not asked to self-nominate ethnicity, and the resultant cohort represented the broader demographic profile of the communities in which the study took place, which average 96% White (Scottish, Other British, Irish, Polish, and Other) at the last census (Scottish Government 2011). Sampling on the basis of ethnicity or other equalities characteristics was beyond the scope of the study.

The study sought to gather a cross-section of community experiences of organised crime from the case-study areas and utilised a referral-based, or 'snowball', sampling strategy to reach suitable participants. In three of the case-study sites,

local fieldworkers were employed to assist in recruitment and interviewing as a means of reaching individuals that would not usually participate in academic research.

Mirroring recent public attitudes surveys (Scottish Government 2018b), only a minority of respondents discussed direct experiences of victimisation. Nonetheless, and in contrast to the broader findings of that survey, the vast majority of community respondents were aware of the broader effects of organised crime in their areas, and the ways in which such activity impacts on their day-to-day lives and their sense of safety in the community. It is notable, however, that connections between street crime and organised crime were often based on informed perception rather than direct experience.

While the case study areas had traits that were similar to other communities in Scotland, however, it should be noted that these findings should not be read as a generalised picture of SOC-community relations in Scotland. While these themes were evident across the various case study locations, it is notable that there were differences in intensity between urban, semi-urban, and rural contexts. The intensity was highest in the urban embedded context and least intense in the diffuse location.

A study of this nature demanded a sophisticated approach to the avoidance of harm and the protection of participants. Achieving this involved both adherence to overarching ethical principles as well as detailed protocols in relation to site-selection and oversight, access and recruitment, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality, and vulnerability and harm minimisation. The study proceeded in accordance with the British Sociological Association Ethical Guidelines and the British Society of Criminology Statement of Ethical Practice, and received ethical approval from the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee. All individuals and communities who participated are anonymised in this report, with identifying features removed.

Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the methods, the research design, and data protocols involved in the study. In seeking to answer new questions relating to the community experiences of organised crime in Scotland, the study employed a rigorous three-stage research design involving two separate strands of data-collection in three primary and two 'mini' case-study sites. Data-collection was structured by a three-point typology of SOC-community relations, including: (1) urban, embedded; (2) semi-urban, embedded; and (3) national, diffuse. Across these areas, the study involved the participation of 188 individuals, representing a wide cross-section of age, gender and experience, through interviews and focus groups. The study also successfully engaged 33 participants in community 'co-inquiry' sessions focused on triangulating findings and devising collective responses. Subsequent chapters will introduce the principal findings of the study.

3.   Community Experiences of Organised Crime

Overview

This chapter explores the views of local residents on the community impact of SOC, with reference to practitioner and stakeholder views where relevant. It explores the diverse range of community experiences of organised crime in Scotland, engaging with three connected themes that emerged from interviews with community residents: visibility and violence; victimisation and vulnerability; and stigma and stereotype. Taken together, these themes describe the principal forms of relationships that exist between SOC and communities in Scotland, and document the experiences and perceptions of residents regarding the extent and nature of SOC in their local area.

For local residents, organised crime was deeply interwoven into the fabric of everyday community life. While not all forms of organised criminal activity were visible, there was a clear awareness that forms of violence, intimidation, and exploitation were attributable to criminal networks 'beyond the street'. Participants expressed a range of responses to the presence of organised crime in their local area, ranging from frustration and anger to fear and resignation. Many reported anxieties about reporting organised criminal activity to the police for fear of repercussions.

Participants reported a significant indirect harm in the form of stigma and stereotype. While there was frequently pride expressed towards their local area, there was also a common frustration at the public perception of the community as one linked to crime, drugs, and violence. This was often contrasted with the fact that the individuals profiting from the local drug trade were no longer resident and had moved elsewhere, largely to more affluent areas.

It was felt that organised crime groups had a detailed knowledge of vulnerability in local areas, particularly those that may be susceptible to coercion into assisting in their criminal enterprise. Groups sought opportunities to create financial gain from exploiting or recruiting vulnerable individuals. Indeed there was a perception amongst some official participants that groups had a more detailed and up-to-date knowledge of local vulnerability than their own organisations.

Visibility and violence

The first major theme in interviews with local residents related to the visibility of organised crime on a day-to-day level. One resident explained how people in the community can be impacted by criminal activities such as drug dealing while going about their everyday lives:

Oh, watched it the other week there... Driving up, the guy, there wis a guy standing ootside this big fancy motor... next thing this moped comes down, goes down to the guy in the motor, you see them exchanging...And I thought,

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how brazen can you be? (Community respondent, Semi-Urban Embedded, female aged 31-50)

Yet, as much as this resident commented on how 'brazen' this behaviour was, participants' narratives also suggested that such activities are normalised to the extent that people do not recognise it as unusual until they are in a position to reflect upon it – perhaps getting older, or moving away from the area. One resident commented:

When chaos is chaos and you see it everywhere, it's normal... ye see neighbours beating lumps out of each other, it's just what you see, it's only when you're older you realise (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 18-30).

One female resident recounted an incident in which she had sent her daughter to the local shop on an errand, and received a phone call advising her to collect her daughter because there were people fighting and inflicting damage on one another using hatchets. Another resident explained that the impact is particularly felt by vulnerable people, such as the elderly:

It is tricky 'cos … it has such a huge impact on neighbourhoods and people's lives and, you could hae somebody dealing and, like, you've got blocks of four, say … and you could have a family in one, somebody dealing in another and an elderly person in the other, and then a single vulnerable young person in the next and it's, the impact on them aw's different and one might complain but the rest of them willnae (Community respondent, National Diffuse, female aged 31-50).

The cumulative effect of these experiences is the development of a level of fear, anxiety and apprehension that form part of the background to daily life, and at times a degree of resignation to such conditions.

While certain of these visible low-level crimes may not have been directly connected to SOC, there was a perception that many were. This ambiguity was caused in part by the relative invisibility of the operation of criminal businesses, with the 'organisation' of such activities largely hidden from public view. As one resident noted, the individuals behind local drug markets are seldom visible:

[Illicit drug supply] It's well organised. But those at the top of the tree, ye' never see them on the street. But ye know who's doing what, and who they're doing it for… And you wonder why it's never addressed, it's never dealt with (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, female aged 51-75).

There are benefits for those engaged in SOC activity – either as providers or users of illicit products or services – to remain 'under the radar', particularly in their attempts to avoid unwanted attention from policing agencies or from competing criminal groups. As one community respondent described:

Cos you know, at the top of the street, there's a group – on a bad day – maybe about 15 boys, standing around… Just people standing about, and then a boy turns up on a bike, then goes away, then there's a big man on the phone. And you realise that's what's happening, peddling. But yeah, the community's well aware of it. (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male 18-30]

The visible signs of SOC activity – be it violence or drug dealing – was therefore in many ways only the 'tip of the iceberg'. The visible manifestations, practices, and transactions of SOC rely on a subterranean, 'underworld' structure that extends well beyond the confines of community street-life. However, whilst these structures may have proven invisible to an outsider, residents were all too aware of their existence. As one female resident put it, for many the presence of organised crime is something that 'everybody knows' but that 'ye just try tae stay away fae' and 'not get involved'. Some participants spoke of a culture of fear of the possibility of violence and intimidation if they tried to challenge perpetrators. One resident suggested that people risk being 'disappeared' unless they 'do what they're told'.

In every locality there were certain known areas of anti-social and criminal activity which parents would actively prevent their children from going to, and that social work personnel and teachers were equally aware of. For example, in one group discussion with young people the participants highlighted a number of areas where they would not walk or hang about due to an awareness of the issues that could arise regarding criminal activity. It was recognised that the constant background of violence in the community – what has been described by others as 'ambient violence' (Barbarin et. al. 2001) – can result in significant and long-term impacts on people's lives, at both an individual and community level.

While the majority of residents demonstrated a clear awareness of organised criminal activity, some did not always recognise street crime as being connected to larger criminal networks. As one legal expert stated:

If you step back, there are probably large parts of the community … that go about their daily life and aren't actually necessarily aware of or impacted [by organised crime]. (Local Authority Legal Officer, National Diffuse)

Many respondents highlighted the contradiction that the individuals profiting from organised crime commonly lived in more affluent areas. One resident discussed an instance when a 'posh lassie' from his school had been horrified to learn that her new neighbour was an organised criminal. Another noted that whilst those in affluent areas would 'look down' on his local area, he knew of several prominent organised criminals living there due to their accumulated wealth. Another resident discussed the relationship between visibility and power/authority within the local criminal hierarchies:

The people who are makin' all the money, aren't the ones at the front line, they're using other people to do it. And it's pretty obvious who's involved in it, ye take a walk along the street and ye'd be able tae identify that… Ye see it on every street…. They [top bosses] don't stay here. But their presence is there.

And it wouldn't take ye long to notice, see the motor with the blacked oot windae. There's people and businesses, the investment is comin from somewhere … That network still exists. And it exists street by street (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 31-50).

Similar themes were raised and explored in one of the prison-based focus groups, where there was repeated mention, for example, of people 'living in big houses and driving fancy cars', or 'living in good areas but profiting off misery'.

Fieldwork disclosed a further perception that individuals involved in organised crime had successfully established a 'legitimate' business identity involving car washes, garages, taxi firms, soft play centres, and delicatessens. The 'legitimate' and 'criminal' aspects of these groups' activities were therefore intertwined.

While violent victimisation was not experienced by many participants, there was a clear perception that violence was an everyday reality for those involved in SOC activity. For these individuals, threats, intimidation, and violence were considered routine. One resident described the memorials for local crime figures, involving 'a thousand Buckfast bottles stuck to the railing'. Nevertheless, excessive violence affecting the community was considered relatively rare in the communities explored in fieldwork, and tended to involve those already participating in SOC activities.

While violence is commonly associated with organised criminal activity, almost by definition, this creates a public profile, and attracts the unwanted attention of police. Local residents therefore suggested that it is often the implicit threat of violence, rather than the explicit exercise of violence, that allows groups to exert coercive control over communities. For one social work participant, reflecting on a 'power vacuum' and subsequent instability in a local criminal market, the overuse of violence can be simply 'bad for business.'

Where violence is used by organised criminals, there was a common perception that it was targeted against others 'in the game', to retain control of criminal markets or to establish new ones. As one legal expert states:

They generally fall out amongst themselves, and the violence will usually be confined within their own groups. And they don't want to draw attention to themselves. And if they've no business with you and you've no business with them, then the chances are you'll never have any dealings with them (Local Authority Legal Officer, National Diffuse).

This was not the case everywhere, however, as 'innocent' people could be caught up in the violence associated with local disputes between organised criminals. One participant described a case in which a friend was mistaken for a local drug dealer and had his neck slashed with a Stanley knife, resulting in multiple stitches.

Victimisation and vulnerability

A persistent theme in discussions with residents was the impact of victimisation and vulnerability on community life. Victimisation came in multiple forms, from direct

forms of sexual exploitation and indentured labour, to more indirect forms, where debts and coercion are used to exploit vulnerability. Issues with poverty, debt, drug and alcohol addiction, and mental health were mentioned frequently, creating vulnerability to exploitation and harm.

One resident in a rural area emphasised the vulnerability that comes with being income deprived, and how this could be exploited by members of SOC groups:

> They're easy to charm, you can flash 20 or 40 quid at someone with no money, who are hungry. They're in. And they'll usually have them running around with 50 quid [worth] at a time, so it's just a possession charge… They're quite a slick operation … they've honed their craft (Community respondent, National Diffuse, female aged 31-50).

A professional working in a Type 2 community highlighted the danger of drug users accumulating debts and becoming involved in dealing drugs to 'pay off' what they owe. They reflected on 'guys who've maybe spent a bit too much on coke, who've maybe got themselves into a bit of debt, and who've ended up driving a car or having to take a parcel or whatever, and they take the 'derry' [blame] for whoever has given them the job'. She suggested that those participating know the potential risks of being involved in such activity, such as prison sentences, but said that there is both a 'culture of fear' and a 'culture of acceptance'. Vulnerable people are willing to accept the potential risk of prison because they fear the consequences of informing the police about those organised criminals involved in orchestrating, and benefitting from, such crimes.

Several participants raised a specific issue around rural drug markets in which houses were being essentially 'taken over' by SOC groups for the purposes of drug dealing. One female resident claimed that individuals were taking over people's tenancies and in some cases evicting people in order to deal drugs from the address. Participants in a focus group explained how the owner or tenant of a property is held responsible for criminal activity (such as drug dealing) taking place on the property, regardless of whether or not they have been exploited or threatened into participating. One community worker commented that 'they find someone vulnerable – not necessarily young, there's been single women in their 40s – and their houses are overrun, they openly deal from the place, until it's busted. And the homeowner gets done with intent to supply, and they're gone [the organised criminals flee without sanction].' Following the initial incentive of free drugs it is the threat of violence that binds vulnerable individuals to such exploitative relationships: 'If you don't do what you're told, you'll go into the woods and you won't come back…'. As one police officer described:

> So this guy is just… he is a patsy. We're going up to his door for the tenner bags of heroin, he's not making any money out of it and the coercion, I think the vulnerability is so huge. This guy can't organise a tenancy, he's got the three foot of rubbish, he's got a telly, he's got an ashtray and his beer cans … so somebody on a daily basis – here's today's supply … and then they'll come

up in the afternoon and say give us the money. He's not making anything out of it (Police Officer, National Diffuse).

One professional working with vulnerable people spoke about the experience of one of her clients who had 'gone off the radar' only for the team to discover that someone had moved themselves into his property:

> What had happened, he was probably trying to score some drugs and he had come into contact with this person who was into more organised drug dealing, and my client was making very poor decisions but not on the best basis in terms of mental health, he was vulnerable. So, he allowed the man to move in, essentially, and he processed and packaged the drugs in his house… we became aware of it when my client had been threatened with a gun… he then advised us he was in over his head (Social Worker, National Diffuse).

In another case, a team using fraudulent cheques would pay the cannabis debt of a user if the user cashed the cheques for the launderers. These instances demonstrate the ways in which pre-existing individual vulnerabilities are exploited for profit. In this context, local knowledge is of vital importance. As one housing manager noted, SOC groups have a developed capacity for identifying and exploiting perceived vulnerabilities, be they related to addiction, health or old age:

> If they live in the area they know who they can target… They know exactly what they're doing. They'll also then know in terms of some of our customer groups who have got severe issues with alcohol or drug addictions and on mental health issues and they play on that. So they know they can profile within the local community and identify exactly who knows what (Housing Official, Urban Embedded).

This local knowledge of the landscape of vulnerabilities in the area creates the potential for flexible forms of exploitation that react to the changing economic climate. In 2013, for example, when the UK Government announced the introduction of the 'bedroom tax', this was used by local SOC groups to exploit older people and utilise their homes for criminal activity. One participant, a housing officer, commented on how fears of the financial impact of the bedroom tax among some residents were exploited:

> Your organised crime groups were identifying maybe elderly customers whose families had grown up and moved away, who knew that the whole bedroom tax agenda was on and they were basically saying to people you either move out to a smaller house or you pay the additional charge. They were then exploiting individuals in the community by saying I will give you money and you will pay that into your rent account and we'll use your room or we will use your shed, your garage, your lock-up and you'll ask no questions. (Housing Official, Urban Embedded)

The harms associated with these forms of exploitation are clear. Feelings of fear, anxiety, and insecurity were often mentioned – as one police officer noted, 'a

physical fear when you mention people's names...… it does have a grip on people – but also more direct feelings of intimidation and threat'. In one case, a witness to a crime felt a daily fear of repercussion; another discussed feelings of 'powerlessness' and the ways in which this impacted on their mental health and wellbeing. A social worker reflected that 'living with high anxiety levels can be caused by this fear … the causes and stresses are very environmental', with impacts such as staying indoors, anger, substance misuse, and a lack of motivation.

Stigma and stereotype

As well as effects such as exploitation, participants also reflected on indirect consequences such as 'area stigma' and stereotype. The stigmatisation of areas based on perceptions of drugs and organised criminal activity emerged as a central theme across the fieldsites, with participants noting the existence of negative perceptions of the area both within their own communities and elsewhere.

A dominant theme that came through in each of the research sites was the negative connotations of living in the communities, as they are viewed as deprived and dangerous, regardless of residents' lived experiences. Reputations for particular types of crime, both 'low-level' and more serious and organised forms, were an important part of this stigmatisation, alongside the presence of abandoned buildings, waste-ground and unkempt public spaces.

The impact of drugs markets was central to this reputation. Young people in one of the fieldsites repeatedly discussed the presence of 'junkies' and in one of the prison-based focus groups, drugs were agreed to be the worst effect of organised crime on communities. Several participants related their involvement in drug using and dealing to early childhood trauma – increasingly referred to as 'Adverse Childhood Experience' (ACE) – and saw drug-use as a form of escapism that created further trauma. In another fieldsite, one resident explained the aggregated impact of such drug use on the standing of their community:

> Aw [the reputation is] bad. The minute ye say yer fae [area], people that know it react [negatively]. Ah don't think it's as bad as it wis, but still gets a bad name. There are decent people here, not our fault it gets a bad name (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, female aged 31-50).

Another reflected that 'whether there's just somebody sitting oot their face, the image that it projects for the area is no a positive image at all'. Drug abuse also emerged as a significant factor in semi-urban and rural communities, and the effects of addiction were widespread. Reflecting how such matters had become intrinsically linked to local perceptions, one respondent reflected that road signs for their town had been vandalised, with the label 'junkies' written over the name.

The presence of organised crime, and the associated reputational effects, was also seen by local organisations as creating stigma and barriers to economic investment. All case study areas were characterised by respondents as containing

populations that were somehow 'overlooked' or 'abandoned', with this perceived neglect exacerbating local problems such as poor health and substance misuse.

In each fieldsite, there was concern around the role of the media in highlighting, accentuating, and reinforcing such stigma. As one resident reflected, 'there is … some level of stigma, because the press is always full of it, you hear all the negative stories'. Many participants assumed that the researchers would have prior knowledge of local crime stories due to the frequency of reports in the press.

The constant reinforcement of such damaging narratives was considered by some as unjustified. As one participant explained, 'I think crime happens everywhere. You only hear about it in certain locations. I kinda feel like it's more highlighted in some areas'. Importantly, however, local residents sought to challenge stereotypes and counteract stigma where possible. Respondents described the ways in which these reputations were negotiated through highlighting the positive aspects repeatedly neglected in popular representations.

For example, one local resident in an area undergoing regeneration commented that the area is 'thriving', and others mentioned new schools and facilities being built, countering this narrative of decline. One young male participant spoke about friends who had secured apprenticeships in areas with otherwise high levels of unemployment. In general, there was a sense of pride in the respective areas, many residents continue to live there out of choice despite difficulties, and benefit from close family nearby. In another area, a local group had begun publishing a newsletter highlighting the positive steps being taken in civic improvement and distributed it to local households. There was also broad agreement across the interviews that visible and public gang fighting has declined in recent years.

Yet, a common theme in each site was that positive stories of community engagement and civic improvement would not be covered by a media with preconceived notions of how their readership views the communities. One participant recalled that a local newspaper had sent their crime reporter to cover a positive story in the area, as they had most knowledge of the community. He explained that the journalist had asked him for a quote about his community:

> He wanted a quote that [area] was a warzone – so he asked if I would call it that. I said I call it my home. There's a lot of good people in [area]. I'm happy to say I love [the area] (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 51-75).

The impact of this reputation on those living within communities was expressed in multiple ways. There was a clear sense that, when leaving their community or applying for work elsewhere, an address could create preconceptions about them, with one resident altering their postcode to a nearby affluent area in an attempt to avoid this.

Across the fieldsites, there was a perception that as the more successful criminal actors had relocated away from their communities, the lingering and ongoing

stigmatisation was unjust. One resident expressed the view that the presence of organised crime in the area was unfair, as the principal actors had left and moved elsewhere to areas without the taint of criminal association. This double standard was seen as fundamentally unfair, and as such the reputation of the fieldsites as being 'home' to organised crime groups was strongly contested by residents: 'they aw moved away years ago'. The ill-feeling related in part to visibility of criminal markets, and partly to the perceived respectability of the more affluent neighbourhoods where more successful criminal actors reside. One local resident, for example, discussed the ways in which this double standard operates:

> I know for a fact, where my brother and sister-in-law live [an affluent area] two doors up is – or was – head of one of the biggest drug families in the city. The only thing is, he's not dealing in the street. But, in this street, you'll see people dealing every day (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 31-50).

One result of the stigmatisation of communities due to the presence of organised crime are the positive, and often subtle, ways that communities resist and respond to the impacts of criminality. Rather than direct confrontation with often dangerous individuals or groups, the most common step taken across the fieldsites was the organisation of events and groups for young people to take them off of the streets and away from the impacts of crime. Those participants involved in such projects emphasised their desire to offer alternatives to young people to divert them from 'hanging around' and potentially becoming involved in criminal activity. There were several success stories across the fieldsites of young people interacting and being deterred from criminal paths, and many of those also returned to the organisations to volunteer to help others.

For those working with and delivering services within the communities, the impact of long-term stigmatisation impacted significantly on their attempts to improve place image, with a frustration expressed over the resignation that had developed among a significant number of residents. This could be seen as understandable given the constant challenges and setbacks faced when trying to secure outside investment for these areas. One participant who ran a community facility suggested that the 'big chains' do not want to open up or maintain shops in the area because of the reputation for anti-social behaviour and poverty. Moreover, investment in community facilities and programmes to support communities has also been deeply affected by cuts to funding. One participant explained that this disproportionately affects young people living in the area:

> Aw' the things that's getting cut is youth services, youth work, and there's nae actual money that goes into infrastructure for young people to play (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 51-75).

Stigmatisation, therefore, has impacted upon residents, workers, service providers, and the private sector in each of the fieldsites due to the presence and reputation of criminality, and the relationships with organised criminal networks. This suggests

the need for investment and improving opportunity, as well as the development of methods of combating stigma and stereotype.

Summary

This chapter has outlined a range of impacts and experiences of organised crime in community contexts across the case study areas. These have an impact on individual residents, and on the community in general. It is important to note the differences across the areas in terms of geography, history and environment that play a key role in how such impacts are internalised by local residents.

The visibility of the effects of SOC – for example, violence or local drug dealing and drug use – was contrasted with the invisibility of some of the key players, leading to a situation in which fear, rumour and intimidation were part of the community experience. Such fears had a significant impact on residents' safety and wellbeing. At the same time, residents felt that often unfair reputations for criminality – particularly drug use – negatively impacted on both external and internal perceptions of the area, creating an obstacle to recognition of the harmful instances of victimisation and vulnerability that existed below the radar of the wider public.

It is also clear that vulnerability – due to age, lack of supportive family structures, addiction, debt, poverty, or mental health issues – is exploited by SOC groups in order to reduce/divert the risk associated with their own offending. Fear, violence, resignation, and a lack of alternative opportunities, help to sustain SOC by curbing resistance to it.

Nonetheless, in each fieldsite it was clear that there were a majority of law-abiding citizens, and a great deal of grassroots community work in operation. This suggests that the best asset in responding to organised crime is the community itself. Individuals involved in harmful, exploitative or coercive practices are deeply intertwined with the majority of law-abiding residents via families, friendships and other social connections.

4. Narratives of Organised Crime

Overview

This chapter explores the narratives that circulated in the case-study sites relating to the 'push' and 'pull' factors that motivated involvement in organised crime. Importantly, these narratives were repeated by a wide cross-section of local residents, service providers and statutory agencies, taking on the sense of a self-fulfilling prophecy. Despite the fact that the corrosive impacts of organised crime were well-known and discussed, there were a lack of 'counter-narratives' against participation.

The chapter is structured in four sections, exploring common narratives relating to: (i) poverty and inequality; (ii) family, mentoring and recruitment; (iii) boredom and excitement; and (iv) 'flash cars' and ready cash. The chapter draws heavily on the data collected from those whose lives are most likely to be impacted upon by criminal activity - residents, service providers and community activists – while emphasising forms of counter-narrative and protective factors that emerged.

Poverty and inequality

The first narrative regarding involvement in organised crime related to structural inequalities, which were a very real and tangible issue for all participants. One female resident of an urban embedded community suggested that 'the community's been forgot aboot', in spite of recent efforts to regenerate the area's housing stock. They pointed out that there is 'very little opportunity for employment', emphasising the fact that physical regeneration of an area, whilst important, has limited impact on residents' life chances if employment opportunities are largely absent. The 'pull' of income through illegal activities was perceived to be greater than those gained from legitimate employment, particularly when employment opportunities are absent, or restricted to low-paid, unskilled, and precarious work. As one participant stated:

> It's tough bein from an area where there's no opportunity. You don't really realise it until you're older that there isn't the opportunity tae move up in society, there's nae upward social mobility … you could drive tae the [supermarket nearby] and you drive past fancy hooses, flash cars and you think, well, why should I no have that? And when you've no really been taught how tae dae it in a legitimate way, you dae think drug dealin' is an easy option (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, female aged 18-30).

Similar comments were made by participants in another community. One resident commented that people in the area get involved in crime because 'if there's no money coming in, what would you do? If you want money in your pocket you'll want to get it wherever you can, like steal'.

It was also suggested that the struggle to afford basic goods can lead to 'passive' involvement in criminal behaviour by purchasing stolen or counterfeit products, although participants were generally silent on any personal involvement in purchasing counterfeit goods. One young participant from an urban embedded community noted however that 'my mum bought nappies'; an example of involvement in petty level crime arising from the experience of poverty. In other areas, buying illicit, counterfeit and smuggled tobacco was raised as a widespread criminal behaviour because 'everyone knows someone who can get it'.

This balance between the respondents viewing the availability of such goods as being widespread, but not self-identifying as having purchased such goods, is perhaps unsurprising given their illegality. Findings from the 2016-17 Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (Scottish Government 2018a) show that whilst the majority of adults in Scotland (86%) had no experience of being offered fake or smuggled goods over the last year, of those who had been offered, the most common types of fake or smuggled goods offered were cigarettes / tobacco or clothes.[1] People in the 15% most deprived areas were more likely to say they had been offered at least one type of fake or smuggled good in comparison with those in the rest of Scotland (26% compared with 9%).[2]

Consistent with these survey findings, participants perceived links between such 'passive' involvements in crime for local people and increasing levels of poverty in the context of austerity. One participant commented:

> Another thing, to be fair to people that get involved in low-level crime, if you've got a choice of sitting without any power and food, or doing something about it, I don't blame them for doing something about it. It's logic… I'd hate to think what I would do if faced with that. You either die, or you do something about it… We're creating this culture, because people don't have money, they have to improvise (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 51-75).

These narratives of involvement in organised criminal activity were noted by both residents and statutory agencies, with a perception that the experience of poverty and inequality could lead to both direct and indirect involvement in local criminal markets. Coupled with these community perspectives, practitioners discussed the ways in which involvement in organised criminal markets, particularly drugs, could exacerbate poverty through 'vicious cycles' of debt:

> Local money lenders, who might be connected to the people you bought the drugs off in the first place, so you get grandparents, parents going to illegal money lenders to give to kids, to pay off drug debts. It absorbs every single penny it can in a community. So that's a big impact on poverty and inclusion. (Expert Interview, Third Sector)

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[1] The survey did not include questions on whether or not people had actually purchased fake or smuggled goods. 2% said 'don't know or can't remember'

[2] See supplementary data table 2.69c, available online: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Crime-Justice/Datasets/SCJS/SCJS2016-17vol2

Organised crime was characterised as a relatively common and fixed feature of community life by many respondents, touching people's lives in a range of ways. One participant depicted the struggle between local community activists and the pull of SOC activity as between the 'community' and the 'anti-community', which summarises this conclusion:

> In the long term, family loyalty to that 'other community' tends to undermine their effectiveness. Really there is a need for more 'muscular' and proactive early intervention. It is extremely difficult to reach or work with those who are closer to the 'anti-community', who find it easier or safer to be part of that group or community' (Police Officer, Urban Embedded).

The challenge for service providers and residents alike was to engage in a more proactive way to challenge these narratives and provide alternative opportunities.

Family, mentoring and recruitment

The impact of poverty on families emerged as an important theme in interviews. Although it is important to avoid reinforcing stigmatising stereotypes of 'problem families' in deprived areas, there was a sense that in some cases parents are less able to act as 'positive role models' for their children. As one youth worker reflected, these structural issues have a range of impacts, particularly on families. He explained that 'they're struggling, you know, they're struggling to control their bairns, they're struggling cos there's no enough income and they're struggling cos ultimately where's the hope, you know, where's the hope ae that kid daein' something that a middle class kid could dae'.

A professional working in an urban embedded community stated that, in their opinion, 'drugs and the breakdown of families is at the root of it all [anti-social behaviour and criminal activity], as children are being brought up in chaotic circumstances and very often go on to lead chaotic lives'. A practitioner working with young people commented:

> The other thing is pro-criminal families, that's really important. That's the case with some of the people we work with, you can sometimes go back to their grandparents being involved in armed robbery and extortion. That whole criminal viewpoint that being a criminal is a good thing, the establishment is a bad thing. No one is to be trusted. It's a cultural thing. For some kids it's expectation – there's an expectation that you'll behave in a certain way, you're a chip off the old block (Expert Interview, Third Sector).

The lack of parental discipline was raised frequently in discussions about young people's criminal activity in one community. One resident stated that 'some of the young kids may have grown up with parents that are involved in drugs and crime. Some parents consider their kids as burdens, and this is why they are not responsible for them'. Similarly, a youth worker recounted a conversation with a parent of a young person involved in street crime, with a suggestion that additional personal responsibility is required for both parents and children:

> Standing in the pub having a pint and a guy will say, 'see these wee bastards' … I'm like that, that's your laddie. 'Aw he's got f*ck all tae dae'. Well go and dae something with him them. You go and dae something wi' him then if he's nothin tae dae, you, you're his dad, you dae something wi' him (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 51-75).

In some cases, participants emphasised the inter-generational aspect of serious organised crime, whereby certain families are notorious for having several family members involved. One resident stated:

> "Apples from trees" we call it. They're growing up getting taught. I've tackled some of the parents who had been involved in serious crime, and their sons are following the same route. Their attitude is, if he doesn't do it, someone else will. It's like providing a service, and that's how they justify it (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 31-50).

A related narrative that emerged in interviews was the sense of people being 'mentored' into organised criminality. The extract below from an interview with another resident illustrates how children can become involved in serious criminal activity due to family vulnerability:

> I remember meetin' a wee guy, he was about 6 or 7, who used to spend his nights on the street directin' people to the hooses to buy drugs. And I used to think anything could happen. And that was his opportunity to make money, he'd get five pound here or there. His mother wis an alcoholic, his dad wasn't there, he had a wee brother and sister, he wis makin the money (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 31-50).

Reflecting findings elsewhere in relation to the recruitment of young people into SOC activity (CYCJ 2018), a young male resident in an Urban, Embedded community suggested that 'It always starts, if you tell this person that, I'll gie ye a fiver, a tenner. It all starts when yer younger, he gave me a tenner for tellin' somebody something. And that gets the ball rollin' for somebody tae say, right here's a hundred quid tae put something through a door'. He went on to emphasise the existence of power hierarchies in terms of age: 'it's easy enough for somebody a lot older than you tae pressure ye intae it, they use that as an incentive, you should be grateful'.

Other participants explained that young people are seen as ideal recruits for drug dealing as they can be controlled and dominated more easily. One reflected on a shift from 'adults punting, addicts with issues' to having children involved instead, and he suggested 'with an addict, ye' might get mair chance of bein ripped off'. He suggested that families often end up in dangerous, vulnerable positions:

> Whereas, with young people, they know who their families are, they've got control fae a higher level. So they don't need tae come doon here and control these young people as puppets, if they control the parents, their brothers. And

it's happened, houses have been destroyed. Because stashes have gone missing, people have been accused of stealin' them (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 31-50).

Interviews with business owners and employees, as well as participants from across the case study sites, supported this assertion that young people are targeted from a young age. Reflecting recent research findings (CYCJ 2018), several participants suggested that it starts with small tasks but develops into deeper involvement in organised crime, usually drug dealing, with vulnerable young people seen as expendable. A business owner operating in a busy urban area noted that young people's visible involvement in anti-social behaviour appeared to decrease as they are targeted by drug dealers and are 'moved up a notch' in terms of criminal activity. A community police officer compared this progression to that of legitimate industry, in which a good reputation can help an individual achieve early promotion and reward:

> They're just starting off as low-level drug dealers so that's an involvement with SOC and like any other organisation I think that people higher up the tree will look at some of the young team and identify who in their eyes is doing well and who's doing a good job and these people will progress through the higher levels of the SOCG (Police Officer, Urban Embedded)

Importantly, however, it was clear in other interviews that families could also act as a protective factor against involvement. One resident reflected on his personal experience with a former partner's family who were 'well known for bein' involved in organised crime', and noted that his own family tried to discourage his participation:

> They [a local SOC group] tried to encourage me tae be part of it. They arranged for me to stay overnight in one of their hooses, a big mansion in the suburbs. A really affluent place, offered me and the girlfriend to come for the weekend. I knocked it back, and then that weekend, the house was raided and the guy got done. They found a gun, money. They offered to put an ice cream van in my name. I wis getting these opportunities, ma' dad had tried to warn me tae stay away and after a while, I realised I was on the wrang path (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 31-50).

While the longstanding impact of unemployment created a persistent pool of new recruits, it is important to note that family and mentors can act as a brake against involvement in SOC activity.

Boredom and excitement

A third prominent narrative that sustained an explanation for participation in organised crime, particularly in relation to young people, related to boredom and excitement. This was reflected by both young people and those involved in youth groups and leisure organisations, with a general lack of available leisure activities and constraints to engaging with older teenagers.

Focus groups were conducted with school pupils in three of the fieldsites, within which young people disclosed the perception that there was little for them to do within their areas. One pupil from an urban embedded community stated that 'there's nothin actually [here] other than hooses' and that the community centre is 'full ae wee lassies and boys, there's a soft play [but] nothin for us [older children] tae dae'. A similar perception was reflected in other urban and semi-urban communities, where school pupils stated that there is 'nothing to do, it's actually borin'.

The lack of activities for younger people was reinforced by older respondents and those working and volunteering with young people. A teacher in an urban embedded community spoke about the lack of facilities available for young people within the school, stating that 'we've got nothin for the kids. A gravel pitch for everything. And that's fae the 70s'. For him, the knock on effect was that 'the central attraction for oor kids, here, is that … shoppin centre… dodgy wee shops, gambling shops.'

The lack of leisure space and activities for teenagers was perceived to be a notable 'push' factor in driving young people onto the streets in search of alternative sources of entertainment. Several young people who took part in interviews mentioned issues of underage drinking and hanging around areas such as shops and parks. A school teacher stated similarly that 'quite a lot of our kids congregate in [local park], bevvying at the weekends. There is a lot of drinking goin' on wi' the young team'.

This street presence can lead to participation in low-level anti-social behaviour and, in some cases, vulnerabilities to being mentored for involvement in SOC. A youth worker spoke about his aims to have more outdoor activities for teenagers:

> The feeling I get from the young people is a lot of them are only criminals in the sense that they don't have anything else to do, or they don't feel like, I mean they obviously do have other things to do but that's almost, like, natural then, it's, like, you've got nothing to do, 'let's go and set a fire', 'let's go and nick something', 'let's go and smash something up', 'it gives us something to do for a while, get a chase, whatever', that kinda thing. I know the field over there gets set on fire every year, for no other reason than it's something to do (Community respondent, Semi-Urban Embedded, male aged 31-50).

For young people in one urban embedded community, street-based crimes such as theft were seen as entertainment, with one stating that 'ye've got somethin entertainin' ye' aw the time'. In one focus group respondents all attended a local youth organisation where they would 'play Fifa, play pool', but were left with nothing else to do when the club is not on.

Although not expressly responding to organised crime, it is important to note that in each case study there were community efforts to offer alternatives for young people. One community volunteer, for example, spoke of her personal motivations for engaging in the work that she does:

Well I would like, I would like different things for them [….], there is something up the road shortly for youths, so hopefully that'll take some of them [off the street and away from crime] (Community respondent, National Diffuse, female aged 51-75).

Whereas residents largely rely on the police to directly challenge organised criminals, most of the steps taken to challenge the impact of crime on communities and young people are tacitly undertaken by residents with a concern for their locality, and ambition to improve future opportunities.

'Flash cars' and ready cash

A final key narrative that emerged was the visibility of 'success' and ready income. Central to these themes is the continued visibility of successful criminals in local areas, exhibiting outward displays of success and disposable income. The symbolism of expensive 'flash' cars was pronounced in two of the case study sites, representing the presence, power, wealth, and success of organised crime. As one resident states: 'If you drive through, you're gonnae see Audis and Mercs [Mercedes Benz]. They don't belong to doctors. And the people that own those cars, local people know who they are and what they do'. Similarly, a police officer in a semi-urban embedded community noted that:

> There's a guy in his twenties who drives around in a [car type], not worked a day in his life. That's gotta be an attraction to the kids – 'look at him, he doesn't have to work, he's protected by that person'… It's really obvious in terms of the cars on their drive, and they change them quite regularly. The lower-level ones are really quite flash about it, once they get above the level of street dealer (Police Office, Semi-Urban Embedded).

These symbols of wealth are more prominent and noticeable within the research fieldsites as there are comparatively high levels of deprivation in employment and income, and stands in stark contrast to the historical situation in the local area. This visibility can directly lead to people becoming involved in criminality. As one social worker and resident commented:

> They drive about [area] with big fancy cars, giving out freebies and, before you know it, you're in it up to your eyeballs, you're dealing drugs for them and they're in your house. But these are things that these clients won't share with the police' (Social worker, National Diffuse).

The importance of material goods in shaping the approach of young people towards quick income emerged as a dominant theme. A female youth worker in a semi-urban embedded community explained that 'kids are getting the money into their hand and they're spending it and spending it and spending it, whether it be on a nice new tracksuit. So they're wanting mair, they're wanting mair aw the time so they end up so deep in, it's scary'.

These findings were supported by the prison-based focus groups, where young men with convictions stressed the attraction of money, lifestyle and the rush in a criminal lifestyle. One talked about how hard it had been when he was last released, on a curfew and working during the day, and the difficulties he had with maintaining a routine. He contrasted this with what his lifestyle was like when he was breaking into houses – stealing goods worth thousands of pounds in minutes.

Those working with younger people explained the difficulties in suggesting alternative paths due to the ready incomes that can be earned. One reflected:

> We call it [community] economics, we're saying to the laddies 'you come and dae this course for five days a week and we'll gie you £55'. And the laddies are looking at you and goin, £55?... [They're] sitting wi' about four grand in their pocket. Like, it's, it's, that's what you're up against (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 31-50).

In the context of high levels of poverty there was a perception among residents and stakeholders alike that a 'career' in organised crime was a viable route to wealth and success. As one resident reflected, the 'two biggest ways out of [area], to make money big, are football players and crime. And the most common one is criminality.'

A related factor is the prestige that can be gained through involvement in crime, interacting with notions of masculine 'respect' and toughness. This was more prominent in urban embedded fieldsites where organised crime has been embedded within communities over a period of time. One youth worker asserted that young people involved have 'got this kudos and this status and a lot of money because of what they're daein that they wouldnae [otherwise] have… [and] this is something they're … good at'. It was suggested that punishment is not seen as a deterrent but an expected risk of the lifestyle:

> They, they've went to the jail, I think the most that they've sorta done's two year, but they're goin', 'ach two year's no bother, I'm coming out to fifty grand', know what I mean. They don't worry aboot the justice system (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 31-50).

A similar theme emerged in another urban embedded community, where one resident stated that organised criminals 'seem to catch media attention, and that makes them kinda folk legends. Sadly, in [area], people don't strive to be a doctor, or a policeman. They want to be a gangster'. As one resident explained, the opportunities for young people through crime can seem much greater than others available:

> Cos growin up workin class, when you see somebody wi money, some people might say it's logical. If ye can get a lotta money for dealin drugs… And it's easy money if ye know the right people, cos there is a lot of substance abuse in [area], it is easy money, there's the demand (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, female aged 18-30).

It is important to note, however, that despite this perception there was evidence of an element of mythology surrounding these narratives. In one of the prison-based focus groups, participants referred to their involvement in local drug dealing as 'small-fry' and as 'foot-soldiers'. There was a sense that the group felt that they were low in the pecking order and that the real profits were being made and enjoyed elsewhere, while they spent time in prison.

Imprisonment, out-of-control lifestyles and addiction issues featured prominently in the accounts of individuals with experience of involvement in SOC. Another individual with lived experience of SOC described the ways in which relatively minor involvement could quickly lead to coercion to become more seriously involved. This suggests the need to communicate authentic and credible 'counter narratives' to young people on the cusp of organised criminal activity.

Summary

This chapter has outlined the narratives that were commonly repeated by residents and local stakeholders to explain involvement in crime, in particular organised crime. Long-term issues of poverty and inequality in communities across Scotland create particular vulnerabilities toward participation, concomitant with opportunities for financial and material gain, as well as the 'pull' of ready income, prestige and local reputation.

Emerging from this discussion is a clear indication of the multiple factors that contribute to individuals becoming involved in SOC. These are shaped by aspects including environment, culture, family, poverty, and opportunity. In each field site where the research was conducted, there are a range of ordinary residents working proactively to offer alternatives through youth groups, training programmes and social events. The dominant narrative from their perspective are the challenges posed by budgetary cuts to local groups and services, which has placed additional barriers for working with disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals to improve their opportunities and circumstances.

While local service providers saw the logic of participation clearly – 'flash cars', ready cash, and local prestige – the reality for those with lived experience was that only very few individuals attained material success. Nonetheless, the narrative presented in favour of organised crime is powerful and persuasive, particularly in communities with low levels of trust in police and other state agencies. This narrative presents an alternative way of envisaging the world in opposition to legitimate society and has roots in truths about experience of disadvantage and myths about how it can transform relative life chances.

5. Emergent and Diffuse Organised Crime

Overview

Previous chapters have focused on traditional forms of organised criminal activity in community settings, including markets in illicit drugs and related issues such as violence, coercion and exploitation. However, fieldwork also disclosed a range of new, emergent and diffuse forms of organised crime that have specific forms of impact that are distinct from those covered in earlier chapters.

This chapter discusses a range of emergent trends identified through data-collection, as well as elaborating on the range of diverse and diffuse community impacts of organised crime. The first section will cover the diversification of criminal markets into new areas, including the impact of social media on drug distribution. The second section details the impact of mobile organised crime groups on Scottish communities, while the third focuses on the community impacts of diffuse organised crime, in particular labour exploitation and human trafficking. The final section examines some of the key factors and challenges involved in tackling these forms of emergent and diffuse SOC activity.

New technology and diversification

Whilst fieldwork demonstrated marked continuities in the nature, form and extent of SOC activity in Scotland from previous generations, there were also some signals of change and emerging markets pertaining to youth crime, drug distribution, and market diversification.

Several interviewees – both residents and community and statutory organisations – highlighted a recent movement away from visible, territorially-based gang activity. While historically territorial gang violence might have operated as a seed-bed for later recruitment into more organised criminality, in recent years gang activity appears to have declined. Instead, several participants, including police officers and housing officials, perceived that young people had become involved in criminality as drug couriers.

One professional noted that the use of social media has changed the drug dealing landscape, and young people can be recruited on a more ad-hoc basis as opposed to via territorially-based gangs. A resident in the same area suggested that the senior drug dealers have a strong interest in their recruits not drawing attention to themselves through activities such as gang-fighting, although there were reports of one SOC group employing a local 'young team' to vandalise a business premises as part of a bid for a security contract.

For one resident, although young people were not involved in gangs they were heavily involved in drug dealing. Though geographic territorialism was less of an

issue, having an allegiance to one of the local crime families was, and coming into conflict with a rival family could have similar consequences to what happened in the past when youths intruded into rival gang territories.

One key trend related to the role and reach of internet-based platforms and technologies, and in particular the exploitation of secure messaging systems and social media sites for criminal ends. For one respondent, such innovations in organised criminal activity are simply further evidence of the flexibility of such networks to operate effectively in a criminal market that privileges adaptation to 'threats', principally from policing and enforcement agencies.

Whilst it is clear that new technologies are exploited in criminal markets by well-established organised criminals, in some respects, such innovations may also represent an opportunity for new actors to emerge to serve particular consumers; for example, obtaining fake goods from new markets overseas. In some cases, these new virtual routes continue to have a base in traditional sites of criminal markets. In 2016, a major money laundering operation that connected Scotland to Eastern Europe, using Scottish addresses as 'tax havens', was uncovered.

One police officer noted that this caused particular issues relating to intelligence-gathering, with 'social media platforms such as Snapchat and WhatsApp proving particularly problematic and challenging.' As one respondent noted:

> Things like WhatsApp and stuff is already tied into organised dealing networks. There's some evidence that within a certain [community] […] there's people that have ordered large amounts off the dark net, and because it's kept within a 'non-offending' community, it's a 'party' community, there's a whole different feel to what's going on (Social worker, Urban Embedded).

As well as the use of 'darkweb' technologies to circumvent traditional supply routes, new internet based platforms were identified as a means of advertising and distributing illicit drugs, on the understanding that police are slow to respond to new technologies. As one participant notes, 'a lot of the business is coming through social media… Skype, Snapchat, Instagram and all the rest of it – they knew that the police were way behind in the investigation techniques and how to use that.' Another participant noted, reflecting upon recent changes in the criminal markets, particularly around drugs supply:

> There's a resurgence in the drugs trade that is pharmaceutically…it's the Breaking Bad stuff, it's your chemistry teacher in his shed having watched a YouTube video. I remember when that guy blew himself up in his kitchen … He blew himself right out the window (Police Officer, Urban Embedded).

Alongside such developments, it is clear that new methods of manufacture and distribution have emerged. This extends to the production of counterfeit pharmaceutical products such as Valium or 'legal highs', as well as a shift toward urban cannabis cultivation. Several respondents drew attention to the increase in discovery of 'home' cannabis cultivation. As one participant notes:

You can go down the street and for £100 you can get your propagation greenhouse and a bag full of the topsoil mixed with the right ingredients and your four plants … a lot of the young guys what they were saying is we have to harvest this, we give the three back to the gangster and we keep one….they get to keep one, that will be for their personal use cause they have that addiction or they owe them that money (Police Officer, Urban Embedded).

The development of localised cannabis cultivation was identified as an important source of cannabis supply, including professional set-ups in which water supply and electricity were illegally routed to avoid detection.

In addition, there was evidence of the diversification of income for traditional SOC groups. Sectors where SOC have gained a foothold have diversified beyond traditional core areas such as security services and taxis, moving into new sectors such as care homes, child care, car washes, funeral care, catering, hospitality, and cleaning services.

Vulnerabilities in particular markets were noted, for example in relation to the management of waste. The waste management industry was perceived as one where such criminal penetration was relatively extensive due to the low levels of regulation and enforcement, alongside the willingness of some customers to 'not ask any questions' when someone will dump their waste for 'half the price'. The costs of compliance with environmental regulations, made such 'discounts' highly attractive to less ethically-scrupulous businesses in the pursuit of maximizing profit.

In sum, what has emerged is a more fragmented criminal market in which the traditional model has been placed under pressure by new actors and technologies. The extent to which new developments will result in a more or less stable, or more or less violent, criminal market are currently unclear. While certain issues such as gangs appear to have become less significant, others have arisen in their place, creating specific issues in relation to intelligence gathering, policing and response.

Mobile markets and criminal networks

While the study determined that much organised crime activity in Scotland remains rooted in local communities, it is important to recognise the ways in which organised crime is layered in Scotland, and linked to broader criminal networks and markets across the UK and internationally.

Evidence from drug market research and policing suggests that the most common route for illicit commodities into Scotland is through the open border with England, with major drug supply routes entering the country by road and rail. The cities of Glasgow, Liverpool, and Manchester have longstanding cultural and trade connections, and it is these cities that featured most prominently in discussions of drug supply routes into Scotland. These networks and connections create additional supply routes and the flexibility of sourcing to Scottish SOC groups.

Glasgow and Edinburgh in particular operate as hubs for the onward supply of drugs to their semi-urban and rural hinterlands, extending to the Western Isles and beyond.

As well as established markets in drug supply, a range of other illicit goods and products are routed through transport networks into Scotland via road, rail or sea. Recent years have seen the proliferation and diversification into new markets, including counterfeit pharmaceuticals, alcohol, clothing, medical equipment, and tobacco. Smuggled tobacco is brought in from Eastern Europe, and on some occasions from boats in port in Glasgow and Edinburgh, where tobacco can be bought duty-free in bulk and resold for profit.

The profitability of the heroin trade has however led to an increase in SOC groups from England penetrating markets in north and rural Scotland. These groups use road, train, and bus routes to create steady supply routes in these areas, effectively 'bypassing' the traditional groups in Scotland's central belt and directly accessing other markets in rural areas. A police officer noted the regularity of the trade, with 'young people or low-level patsies acting as couriers'.

This 'mobile market' operated in a different way to those found elsewhere in the country. Instead of an established community base, a flexible drugs market not requiring a strong community infrastructure, was evident. The overall perception was that this form of mobile, flexible market was particularly common in smaller conurbations without an embedded SOC presence. As one housing worker and resident in a rural area stated:

> There's an awful lot of folk coming up from [city in north England] and they'll target a house, they'll basically just come into the house and, and they'll take over the house while they're dealing their drugs and giving that tenant what they need so they can use their house and that… The best explanation that I've heard is [in] our area, there's not a firm, like, family that's in control of the drugs. So they're just coming up and taking advantage of that (Police Officer, National Diffuse).

This pattern of the occupation of the premises of a local individual – often with vulnerabilities related to age, addiction or mental health – by mobile criminal actors was repeated often. In one community, for example, court officials described cases in which seven individuals gave the same address when charged; upon checking, the house was allocated to a vulnerable individual. Another housing officer detailed how their staff would 'go to a tenancy that has a single female and... it's all male clothing that's there.'

As well as using these residences for drug dealing, the housing itself might be rendered uninhabitable. As one local worker noted, 'they even stole the doors, they stole the kitchen. They were stealing everything. And the mess and the holes in the walls and everything, the filth was just horrendous.' Police and transport officials discussed the difficulty of disrupting supply due to the ease of travel connections,

the profitability of the market, and its resilience to disruptive activity, including enforcement.

These mobile markets were in some instances supported by local criminal groups that facilitated cooperation through loose local 'networks of recognition'. A police officer in an urban embedded site reflected upon the established ways in which such networks are formed and sustained:

> They [OCGs in the local area] are linked to a group in the north [of England] … the group have not come up to supplant the indigenous group as there are no turf wars. Rather they co-operate with drug supply, but also collaborate on some other criminal activities… [they] had a guy living in the area. What the group added was increased capacity in terms of supply and sourcing drugs and increased flexibility in terms of moving drugs north (Police Officer, National Diffuse).

Some of the more consistent illegal trading networks featured ostensibly retired gangsters residing in other parts of the UK or abroad acting as consultants for criminal networks. Such individuals can be highly valued, with criminal connections across the UK, facilitated on occasion through contacts established while serving prison sentences. The deviant ex-pat community has ensured that nodes of illegal commerce and leisure are well-established in Europe and beyond.

During the research, reflections on SOC nominals living 'in one's community' came not only from community respondents in case study areas but also from professional respondents reflecting on their own (often much more affluent) home communities. Whilst these senior SOC offenders may not impact on their doorstep in terms of local criminal activity, their ability to professionally network, to 'pass' as legitimate business actors, and to launder and invest money in areas where they are not necessarily known, were seen as a real threat:

> They're not kicking doors in and making threats because that doesn't work. Organisations like this will call the police [….] So… They want to engage, they want to insinuate their way in [….] you know, point to the council grant, point to the council attendance, point to a meeting with the council… And just drop that in to others, even to others who are legitimate, to try and convey that legitimacy (Local Authority Legal Officer, National Diffuse).

This suggests the need to recognise SOC actors not solely through their community *roots*, but also through the changing *routes* through which mobile markets and network-facilitated criminal activity occurs. This also suggests the need to shift from presenting organised crime as solely an issue for socially and economically disadvantaged communities to one that extends its reach to all areas of society, including those affluent communities where many 'successful' organised criminals reside.

Diffusion and diversity

The study found no particularly obvious link between organised crime groups and particular patterns of migration, with criminal activity within new migrant communities following a similar pattern to other geographical communities investigated; in which the vast majority within the community were law-abiding and came into little conflict with the law. There was little evidence of meaningful impacts from transnational or migrant SOC groups within the broader community. Nonetheless, there was some evidence that some precarious migrant communities experienced vulnerabilities emerging from limited networks and social capital, and corresponding forms of exploitation, in much the same way as vulnerable groups within urban embedded or semi-urban embedded communities.

As in other case study areas, the most common level of involvement for migrant communities in drug markets was as consumers and low-level user-dealers. This was a pattern of exploitation similar to those found amongst other communities studied, though with the additional advantage for SOC groups that new migrants gave them access to otherwise hard-to-reach 'customers'. In one case, however, there was evidence that individuals from a particular migrant population had successfully become involved as suppliers in local organised crime markets. As one participant, a police officer, noted:

> [They] are probably more capable than the local population in terms of OC, they've got the contacts… they're dealing cocaine and cannabis, a lot to their own community, but they're now working alongside and with local criminals (Police Officer, National Diffuse).

The ability to work alongside 'local' organised criminals was important for such groups to gain a foothold in established markets, and is mirrored in the ways in which organised criminals from large urban conurbations in Scotland and elsewhere in the UK seek to penetrate and exploit rural criminal markets.

While it is important to recognise the particular community effects of organised crime activity within migrant communities, it is also important to recognise the potential for negative consequences associated with the stigmatisation and stereotype of specific ethnic groups. Interviews drew attention to the impact of stereotyping of migrant groups within the context of larger political events and sought to emphasise the importance of balance. For one community-based respondent, the focus on more serious SOC activities associated with migrants, notably human trafficking for sexual exploitation, was seen to strengthen negative associations between migration and SOC, whilst diverting attention from the far more widespread reality of labour exploitation in the 'legitimate' economy.

New and precarious migrants were however considered more vulnerable to certain types of SOC victimisation. In particular, the involvement of foreign nationals both as organisers and facilitators of human trafficking was a common official concern. Activities linked to human trafficking – including domestic servitude, migrant labour exploitation, and forced marriage – were noted, and could involve more established

members of a migrant community exploiting more vulnerable members of their own community. One legal professional working in the field described how human trafficking could be particularly lucrative:

> Human trafficking is a pretty insidious crime but it's also a booming business. Your commodity, your product moves itself, it can hide itself, it doesn't get used up, it continues to produce, it's flexible, it can be used in many different ways and it's basically the best product you could possibly have if you wanted to make money, and do exploitation (Legal Professional, National Diffuse).

These forms of exploitation occurred particularly in industries with weak regulation, such as car washes, but also in more organised business ventures such as factories. Nail bars and cannabis cultivations were mentioned in several police interviews, as well as links to housing provision with landlords exploiting tenants, exchanging rent owed for minimal rates of pay, sometimes based on tenants working in enterprises run by the landlords themselves. Exploitation was also notably associated with more vulnerable sectors of the migrant population, particularly with individuals with an insecure or irregular migrant status.

One of the most difficult and insidious consequences of this pattern of victimisation is the fact that individuals involved may not see themselves as victims. Those individuals who agencies consider to be 'victims' often fail to recognise the harms to which they are subject. While this was noted in several of the communities, it was most notable in relation to national diffuse activity relating to issues such as trafficking and forced labour. As was recounted by two police practitioners in a joint interview:

> A lot of them don't see themselves as victims, because they are getting some form of payment, especially construction sites and things like that, and paid a lot more normally than they would back home, so they are effectively doubling their money so they don't see themselves as victims.

> That's the big issue, they don't see themselves as victims and at home are considerably worse than where they find themselves now. And although we would view the circumstances they find themselves in now as pretty abhorrent and awful, they don't, so (Police Officers, National Diffuse).

A particularly notable instance of this form of vulnerability and victimisation was a pattern of trafficking from Asia that emerged from several interviews, involving forced labour in nail bars across Scotland. Not unlike the 'push' and 'pull' factors noted above in relation to young Scottish people's involvement in organised crime, the pattern involved young foreign people's recruitment from remote areas and – based on the promise of a better life and facilitated through the use of false documentation – trafficked into the UK for labour exploitation. As a legal professional interviewed during fieldwork remarked:

> If you picked five nail bars in Scotland right now in a two mile radius you'd probably walk into them and find somebody being exploited within it, and we're

now seeing this network spread across Scotland as well. So it used to be sticking to urban places, Glasgow and Edinburgh really, now it's… random places that you wouldn't expect to find it in Scotland (Legal Professional, National Diffuse).

A police officer with experience of tackling human trafficking in a large urban city reflected on the victim cohort, and explained how there were significant practical hurdles that limited the involvement of 'local' organised criminals in this undoubtedly profitable area of organised crime.

It was notable through this research – in case study areas where there were small concentrations of migrant groups – how isolated some of these groups could be in terms of wider community networks. This may account for the negligible extent to which members of the wider communities had information or concerns about these groups, either as SOC perpetrators or victims. This represents an important intelligence gap for policing, service provision and community support.

Tackling 'diffuse' SOC

The challenges of confronting SOC presented particular challenges when the criminality was highly mobile, or spread across a broader area. Where policing and partners were focused on high-profile, prominent SOC groups, there was ample evidence of success working on a national or cross-border basis. More challenging were instances where SOC groups did not have the prominence to merit this degree of prioritisation, or where groups spread their activities in such a way that they did not register as prominent. For instance, where groups targeted vulnerable households in remote areas, co-opting houses for drug dealing (so called drug gang 'cuckoos'), recognising or acting on the problem was not always easy when local police and partners were not geared up to be looking for SOC activity in the first place. SOC impacts that could be seen as highly significant in a rural context, could nevertheless fail to command national specialist resources when competing with 'big city' SOC.

More discrete, diffuse activity, for instance, involving the sale of counterfeit goods, or the investment of laundered money, could also become particularly difficult when activity was stretched into areas where the individuals concerned were not known to local policing and other local agencies. In these instances, effective intelligence logging, including financial intelligence, and sharing between the police and other allied agencies via available protocols, was particularly critical if organised crime activity was not to disappear into the 'gap' between national organised crime enforcement and local policing.

The restructuring of SOC markets around new digital technologies also poses a profound challenge for policing practices. Technology has collapsed the distances between suppliers and markets, allowing local criminal actors to readily source illicit commodities for themselves via online sources and social media, and to use similar media to discreetly distribute and sell such commodities to local consumers. This allows for the emergence of small criminal enterprises at a local level, running local

illicit markets, whilst simultaneously being able to trade and import globally. Within the context of this study, concerns were particularly raised over the ways in which social media had facilitated new drugs markets, with respondents being quick to highlight their own lack of capacity to identify or address these issues.

A further specific challenge presented by SOC were the impacts associated with migrant or foreign national groups. A lack of knowledge of these groups by other community residents, was found to be mirrored in this research – in some instances – with a lack of knowledge amongst local service providers and community organisations. These issues were compounded at times by the fact that individuals may not recognise or report their exploitation. Even where migrants were being exploited, for instance in car washes or similar under-paid service sectors, some viewed the relative indifference of the wider community to this sort of labour exploitation as a barrier to effective recognition and reporting.

The existence of such 'cross-border' crime presents particular challenges in relation to intelligence sharing and the coordination of intelligence development work. The existence of the Scottish Intelligence Database (SID) and the co-location of agencies at the Scottish Crime Campus (SCC) at Gartcosh has improved coordination within Scotland to tackle organised crime, although some challenges remain in relation to the ability of those at the frontline to communicate effectively and share intelligence on cross-border matters. Equally, whilst the advent of Police Scotland may have removed the structural barriers of police 'borders' *within* Scotland, the mobility of SOC groups across Scotland still presented some information sharing and coordination challenges.

Summary

This chapter has documented a number of emergent and diffuse forms of organised crime as they impact on communities in Scotland. Firstly, these involved altering patterns of drug supply and distribution, which circumvent traditional channels, and the rise of home cannabis cultivation. Secondly, these involved mobile criminal groups who establish drug markets in areas without an established SOC presence, or cooperate with local groups. Thirdly, these involved diffuse and diverse forms of organised crime, particularly labour exploitation and human trafficking, that presents particular problems for policing and law enforcement.

Globalisation and rapid technological innovation and change undoubtedly throw up considerable opportunities and challenges for statutory organisations, and for the police in particular, who are more typically organised around traditional geographies of organised criminality. The current direction of change would suggest that the police and partners need to continue to promote greater flexibilty and innovation in their working practices.

Nonetheless, it is clear that local communities remain a critical part of the picture, their importance being that they provide the ultimate site for market transactions that still often centre on knowledge of customers and opportunities, and which require social networks, social capital and trust to operate effectively. For policing

and statutory partners, knowledge of locality and of community, and associated opportunities for intervention, regulation and prevention, must remain an invaluable resource.

6. Service delivery and community response

Overview

This chapter seeks to examine how SOC impacts on the quality and availability of general services and service delivery in case study areas through direct or indirect means. In considering this impact the chapter also examines how the general levels of fear and intimidation created by SOC in communities acts as a barrier to community engagement and effective exchange. The material in this chapter is predominantly based on interviews and focus group with service providers.

All the main case study areas examined as part of this research could be characterised as experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage, including chronic issues of deprivation, unemployment, and ill health. These difficulties are long-standing, inter-generational and have their origins in the economic, social and structural after-effects of de-industrialisation and recession. Statutory agencies and their partners therefore face considerable challenges in providing services and supporting the needs of the communities. Against this backdrop, the presence of SOC constituted a barrier to effective and equitable service delivery, both 'blocking' and 'distracting' scant resources.

Policing

At the most basic level, the presence of organised crime led to a marked lack of information or intelligence being passed from the community to the police, with suspicion and hostility often characterising the relationship. One participant described it as a 'wall of silence' resulting from the fact that 'everybody is scared or nobody has trust and confidence in the public bodies'. As one police officer noted:

> The vast majority of people in your community are good law abiding citizens so there's a general atmosphere of fear, a kind of low-level fear. What I mean is that there is just that reluctance to speak up. Whilst they are not living in fear that the OCGs are going to come round their door and do them damage you know. I think there is an acceptance that if they were to do something to speak up against them, then damage could be done to them (Police Officer, Urban Embedded).

This lack of communication did not stop at the point of co-operation with the police, but also affected relationships with a broader range of service providers. As one housing officer noted: 'I would say that the folk who are known to be in organised crime are untouchable… you really would not get complaints about them' (Housing Official, Urban Embedded). Similarly, a youth practitioner in an urban embedded community stated:

> Individuals have a control over the communities, they replace the police in some respects. You're living in a community, you're trying to live a normal law-abiding life, you've got children and something happens to the children. It's frowned on to go to the police, people are reluctant to go to the police. Sometimes people go to

them [the organised criminals] to resolve things, then you're compromised (Youth practitioner, Urban Embedded).

Several respondents were quick to acknowledge that a fear of talking to the police was not necessarily irrational when the police service has a limited ability to protect people providing information about others in their community:

> That is partly down to a village mentality, and it's very difficult for us to feel as if we can make an impact. This group of individuals have an incredible amount of strength and power because we can't be standing beside everyone's front door *(Police Officer, Semi-Urban Embedded).*

Community and prison-based respondents both provided stories of the consequences of 'grassing', including 'doors being kicked in' and houses being set on fire, that illustrated the strength of these fears. Yet it was clear that most community members *did* want the police to deal with those individuals that were causing the most harm in their communities. As one participant, a police officer, recounted, in relation to a particular organised crime network:

> A local priest came to an engagement event I went to as the inspector and he says – 'son, do you know what your problem is?' He says '20 years ago he [an organised criminal] was breaking into cars and stealing radio cassettes, it was the fact that he wasn't dealt with as a youth and he was able to grow and grow and grow... he now stays in the leafy suburbs and has his own business and he's loaded... He became a legitimate businessman'. But the community was putting me in my place saying, 'you know, you guys should have taken him out 20 years ago' (Police officer, Semi-Urban Embedded).

However, it would appear that police-community relations were not close or strong enough in our case study areas to give community members the confidence to help or trust the police with this endeavour.

Beyond the general issues of area stigma and weakening community relations with officialdom, there are a range of other ways in which SOC impedes effective service delivery. At its most direct, SOC networks directly challenge or confront local agencies. For instance, a fire officer reported that the same person had made malicious calls to the fire and rescue service and been involved in the firebombing of offices. In another area, a police officer talked of how offending networks used smart phones to effectively neuter proactive police activity in the community:

> We had a road block … and within half an hour it was all over social media. It used to be that when we had an operation we could stop the traffic all day. Now, within half an hour, we're burnt and we need to move it elsewhere. Same thing happened with an operation regarding drug dealing at a flat– within half an hour, there's a picture of one of my officers in plain clothes with the message 'polis are all over, blah blah (Police Officer, Urban Embedded).

In another example, it became apparent that a phone call to police relating to a firearms incident was in fact a ruse to divert police attention elsewhere, allowing free rein in the commission of a planned offence:

> That's the threat – guy with a gun, get everybody up there…you're up there way down the other side [meantime they have] already picked their target, 'cos they've scoped it. We know that we're having that [car] because we've got a buyer for that (Police Officer, National Diffuse).

There was in this study area important connections to be made between joyriding and stealing the cars to order for organised crime groups. Through the interviews it became apparent that there are groups of older men co-opting younger people with the knowledge and ability to steal vehicles to order, across the city, with the sense that once they were back in their own area they could easily evade the police. In addition, the activity could act as a 'smokescreen' for more serious criminality, consuming police resources and contributing to a community perception of the police as ineffectual and unable to challenge offending behaviour. As one officer noted, 'the activities make a clear statement …you cannot police us'. According to one resident, the joyriding associated with vehicle thefts was more impactful than the thefts themselves:

> … a whole community is terrorised by you knocking down their granny or smashing into the side of their car or burning out in someone's back garden, and just roaring about at night when people are walking to and from school, and in the one instance driving at young people coming out of school after three o'clock, you know… there are people frightened to go out after dark (Community respondent, Urban Embedded, male aged 31-50).

Other SOC activities had more indirect, but often more severe, impacts on service delivery and capacity. The most obvious was the targeting of populations with illegal drugs, creating social and health problems going beyond the maintenance of an existing market to the introduction of new drugs to communities, as well as targeting new users with school-based dealing.

Finally, a direct – and far from incidental – impact of SOC was the resources and attention that key individuals and incidents commanded from statutory organisations. An attempted murder, or a prison release of a key individual, could consume large amounts of agency time and effort, and this could extend well beyond the police to other partners such as social work and housing.

Conversely, the business model of SOCGs could involve the frequent 'firing in' (i.e. informing on) low-level criminal associates such as frontline 'user-dealers' to divert the attention of law enforcement officials from more serious criminal activities. The steady feed of relatively insignificant actors through the criminal justice system not only consumes criminal justice resources, but also leaves the most affected communities with a legacy of social damage, as parents are left to struggle on alone, or as families are broken up, or children are subject to long periods of parental separation.

Housing

SOC intervenes at a community level through using knowledge of the community to exploit vulnerabilities, needs, and weaknesses. In the most affected communities, SOC's presence across the lifespan of community members can be as enduring a presence as those of state agencies and institutions, literally spanning from cradle to grave. Consequently, intervention possibilities for legal actors and statutory agencies mirror those targeted by SOC, and our case study sites revealed a range of common challenges and opportunities.

In case study areas that were, in many other respects, deprived of many of the services and opportunities that more affluent areas enjoy, housing remained a significant asset. As such, housing was both a key site for community development and support, whilst conversely also being seen as a business opportunity for SOC, where tenants could be exploited and/or where private rental stock, in particular Houses in Multiple Occupancy (HMOs) could provide a useful business opportunity. Conversely, experienced housing officers could be particularly well placed to identify vulnerable tenants and to initiate various forms of support, intervention or referral:

> It's just being more aware […..] because you're that golden thread in somebody's life. Police might dip in and out your life or they might not – education, social work, social care may or may not but whilst you're living in social housing you will have that common relationship and it is just about being aware and signposting. We don't want housing officers to become social workers but it's that…we need to be the catalyst potentially (Housing Official, Urban Embedded).

Legitimate housing provision in the form of good quality housing association accommodation was a critical resource for supporting vulnerable tenants. Where vulnerable tenants were proving to be problematic due to criminal or anti-social behaviour, the threat of eviction appeared to carry more weight than action by the police; as one housing officer commented in dealing with tenants involved in drug offences or anti-social behaviour:

> It's not about the sanctions of the police – it's the impact on their tenancy. Because we have, certainly over the last 14 years got a lot smarter at managing that to say, well, if you are convicted, albeit we need to wait the 18 months for a criminal case to go through the motions but we will enforce it and we will evict (Housing Official, Urban Embedded).

However, fear of reporting could also impact on the willingness of tenants to seek support with addressing incivilities and criminality, leading to negative consequences for tenants and housing providers alike:

> We've got one close that's really, really bad […..] think it might be a no-go zone that we've got an empty property in that close that we can't let and it's been empty since before Christmas [….] But the tenants in that close don't ever make complaints, it's not that they don't see it as a problem it's just that they don't want

to complain about the people who are hanging about (Housing Official, Urban Embedded).

Conversely, where vulnerable tenants were convicted of low-level offences (typically drug-related), eviction could make any attempt to support and monitor those individuals highly problematic. This issue was raised by one respondent who commented on a woman losing her house because her drug dealing constituted a breach of her tenancy:

A particular girl that we dealt with … well-known in the community, helps old people, you know? Well-liked in the community, well-known in the community, but if you wanted a bit you know that that's where you could, that that's where you could go, and all she did was cannabis (Social Worker, Semi-Urban Embedded).

It was noted that this council were not obliged to re-house vulnerable user-dealers, and that they would often go into private lets, which were associated with increased risk of exploitation and greater difficulty for agencies in terms of engaging with, and appropriately monitoring, at-risk clients. Furthermore, an eviction for relatively small quantities of drugs can amplify the problems of vulnerability and support, as was evident in one example where a user-dealer was evicted and subsequently went back to live with his parents, who didn't in turn have the capacity to support or cope with him.

If you evict somebody that's had essentially a lifetime drug and alcohol problem, and their parents have carried it when you evict them, then it's back onto their elderly parents to deal with it. It potentially raises all types of issues around adult support protection (Housing Official, Urban Embedded).

The issue of eviction and pushing a person into private rentals and HMOs can also cause problems for housing associations:

Housing associations will talk about people making themselves intentionally homeless… They're driven then into low quality private rented housing. We don't know who's backing it [who owns the housing]. We don't know all the issues there. So I think we've got a lot of disconnect between social policies that are trying to work on improving communities and reduce criminality, I think they just put more stress on [communities] (Social Worker, Urban Embedded).

Practitioners across a range of sites referred to individuals with connections to SOC investing in properties to let, including multi-occupancy properties. However, the management of such properties could be problematic and there were difficulties with licensing and inconsistent practices.

Other vulnerable tenants could also fall through the net if they proved too problematic or unsuitable for mainstream housing provision. Notably, more chaotic and at-risk young people moving from more supervised youth accommodation or care provisions could find themselves frozen out of adult accommodation on the

grounds of unsuitability/inability to cope, then being placed in temporary accommodation instead:

> There's this revolving door so you either find yourself in a situation where providers will take them or maybe on a temporary or short term basis. Or it's a short term basis because the young person can't cope with the resource. … At the other end of that scale we have found ourselves having to put young people up in hotel accommodation. The most chaotic need a more stable environment and we're caught between trying to find that stable resource and that hotel if they're too chaotic for the stable resource. It's a terrible place to find yourself (Social Worker, Urban Embedded).

Furthermore, young people who are placed in hotel accommodation cannot cope with the situation that they find themselves in and find it exciting and hence 'they party all night and cause damages'. A more troubling consequence of such placements is that young people could find themselves on a carousel of temporary accommodation, with some accommodation options being associated with risks of various forms of exploitation (including being drawn into criminality) and victimisation (including sexual exploitation).

Broadly speaking, however, respondents viewed social housing as a key site for support, intervention and influence. Housing officers in particular were a far more constant presence in community life than most other service providers, and could therefore develop some measure of community trust and influence. Where social housing was making an effective contribution, it included functions such as being a key medium for generating community intelligence that the police themselves could not directly elicit. Intelligence sharing arrangements between housing and the police on criminal and anti-social behaviour often proved invaluable for both parties. Housing officers could also be a key line of communication between tenants and other support organisations, identifying needs and signposting them to suitable support and services. Larger housing providers had indeed developed sophisticated information systems that allowed them to identify and target both vulnerable and 'at risk' tenants to inform proactive and preventative activity.

Business and retail services

Informal interviews were conducted with a dozen local businesses in three sites, including owners and managers of retail and other services. In contrast to some of the findings in previous research in England (Tilley and Hopkins 2008), the significance of the relationship between SOC and local businesses seemed less pronounced, though it should be noted that business environments in our case study areas were weak anyway, with limited activity, a predominance of small business units, and a modest supply of mostly independent shops and services.

Two of the case study areas were proximate to concentrations of industrial estates and new office developments, but to a significant extent there was considered to be little interplay or overlap between the community and these new economic opportunities, which were largely considered to be employing people from elsewhere. There was certainly evidence, however, that SOC groups had local

investments and used local businesses for money laundering purposes. In one site, such SOC investments were quite well known and were viewed to some extent as providing key amenities for the local community including motor vehicle services and leisure facilities.

A common representation by practitioners in all of our case study areas, however, was how SOC groups invariably extended their interests far beyond the confines of these areas, with higher level actors looking to launder and invest their money wherever the opportunities arose, whether that be elsewhere in Scotland or further afield. SOC actors launder and invest money through complex networks of relatives and associates, and are often quick and flexible in spotting new business opportunities that might typically be vulnerable to SOC infiltration. The police have recently recognised the importance of collecting financial and business information relating to key individuals and their associates, but the quality of information held by the police and by other local partners is still patchy.

Whilst local communities might not ultimately mark the boundaries of operation for a successful SOC business, communities provide networks of longstanding associations, friendships and businesses. These networks, if left unguarded, can provide opportunities for SOC actors to invest, to form relationships with legitimate professional actors (such as solicitors and accountants), and indeed to set themselves up as effectively legitimate business actors. In a climate of austerity, where national government and local councils are keen to promote small business, growth and local enterprise, the opportunities for SOC actors can increase.

Local authority efforts to stimulate economic growth were fraught with difficulty, as there was a perception that contract opportunities could be targeted by SOC groups. The ability of SOC to flexibly seize contract opportunities through offering cut price services has already been well-evidenced elsewhere, and in times of austerity has typically gravitated towards industries and services where cheap start-up costs have given SOC entrepreneurs a significant competitive edge. Whilst, nationally, there are a range of key partners and forums in each local authority area (e.g. trading standards, local authority legal officers and licensing boards), and a range of available measures (including the sharing of police SOC intelligence to help inform decision-making) to help local partners protect the local business environment from SOC encroachment, it appears that in practice capacity and proactivity can be quite variable. Service cuts (particularly to trading standards), a mixed appetite for acting on SOC intelligence, and competing demands, all impacted on the effectiveness of local scrutiny:

> ….licencing boards and committees are very fact-based so intel is a bit of a no no at the moment. There's been literally no success putting evidence to boards because the boards have got a wider remit round about economy and all this. It's great to have all this money coming in and…aye, but it's all going back out the back door! (Police Officer, Urban Embedded).

In terms of the experiences of legitimate businesses in our case study areas, direct victimisation, threats and extortion from SOC was not greatly in evidence, although

utilities works and building sites owned and run externally could attract the attention of private security firms with links to organised crime. In one area, for example, it was clear that at least one attempt by an outside company to start a particular service in the area had been prevented through an arson attack. A more general deterrent to business start-ups in these areas seemed to be the mix of poor infrastructural development, low consumer demand, general issues with anti-social behaviour involving young people and, in one case, the visible presence of drug dealing and drug users.

The local businesses that existed in our case study areas appeared to have equipped themselves well to the challenges of their particular locations, though some relied on quite heavy levels of security to keep premises and staff safe. However, the dominant approach seemed to be that of being known in the community – being well established - afforded a high degree of respect and consideration and many businesses were both proud and quite defensive about the communities that they served.

In instances where particular businesses were being targeted by young people, knowing who to influence or appeal to was key. In one instance, a new business was initially picked on by local youths, but as the business became established and popular with parents, youths were pressured to back off. In another example, a local service provider who was being persistently targeted by a group of young people turned to a key local community figure. Initial attempts to use the police to stop the trouble proved ineffective, whereas appealing to one of the key local drug dealers (with whom the gang were associated) quickly dispelled the issue. That said, credit was also given to the police in tackling more general levels of anti-social behaviour in the area through a focussed use of curfew orders and targeted police patrols.

Schools

Though SOC has been known in the past to have invested in nursery and childcare provision[3] (Murray 2010), the first common intervention point for SOC and state actors outside of family life are schools. As one police officer stated, 'we need to get in early – I think the people that are taking the drugs and committing the crime, we've lost them.' Schools are sites around which early drug dealing and consumption can be organised, and can be the site of both inclusion and exclusion.

School success can help pupils move on from difficult backgrounds, whilst school disaffection and exclusion are well known risk factors for involvement in criminality. Schools could therefore be viewed as key local institutions that have potential purchase on the trajectory of young people's lives. However, in case study areas many were seen to be struggling with the most at risk pupils:

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[3] See: 'Criminals Use Nurseries to Launder Cash' , Scotsman, 1st May 2010
https://www.scotsman.com/news/criminals-use-nurseries-to-launder-cash-1-1366324
'Concern over Glasgow nurseries organised crime link', 15th March 2011
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-12737903

We do a bit of work with the high school, and like any high school I would say that they're losing it, and not through teaching standards. We've got adults buying alcohol for kids, which impacts on attainment. The schools try their best, but if you've got a kid that's not academically strong, and they look …and don't see much by the way of opportunity, but a 21-year old driving a fancy motor with no qualifications or work history, then that becomes your role model (Social Worker, Semi-Urban Embedded).

In several interviews, the life-course of individuals drawn into offending was described as typically involving a process of school drop-out between S2 and S4, invariably involving a mix of school exclusion and truanting, compounded by poor support from parents who themselves had poor school experiences. Recognition, in line with long-established evidence, that keeping kids in school was an important protective factor, had clearly not been achieved for many of the most at-risk children and young people:

We could be more responsive in terms of keeping children in a mainstream school. Some of the young people we work with are incredibly clever but the school has not been able to deal with them. At primary you have one teacher who can be a go-to person for young people and then they go to secondary and that evaporates for children (Police Office, Semi-Urban Embedded).

There was, however, recognition that retaining highly vulnerable young people within schools could – if poorly resourced or managed – impact adversely on the experience of other young people. Drug use and drug dealing was seen as particularly prevalent and problematic in some areas, with kids in school 'off their face on drugs' and consequently causing significant disruption.

Innovation, and more generally recognition and efforts to counter some of the difficulties faced by pupils from the more problematic corners of their catchment areas, varied by school. Indeed in one of our case study areas, which was served by two separate high schools, one school was widely considered to be markedly more successful at affording some protection, in terms of pupils from the area enjoying better integration into the school and into pro-social friendship networks in the school community. Contrastingly, in the other school, children were viewed as remaining relatively isolated, stigmatised and disengaged within the school environment. What remained unclear within the constraints of this study was whether that protection stemmed from any explicit school practices or policies, or was rather an artefact of the differing social contexts and dynamics associated with the two schools.

Effective responses to drug-use were hampered by a lack of intelligence, with young people not coming forward with information, and with drug dealing networks typically being protected through social media encryption. There was a feeling of disconnect between the various services and agencies with responsibility, with schools feeling 'caught in the middle'*:*

There's really good work going on, but it's not joined-up enough…the curriculum they have in Scotland, all these agencies are trying to get in, but there doesn't seem to be a simple collection pot …. I've had headmasters in, and they're all at their wits end with the effect that alcohol and drugs are having, yet I speak to the ADP (Alcohol and Drug Partnership) and they tell the opposite story (Police Officer, National Diffuse).

One promising innovation in one area, at least to get lines of communication open between children and the authorities, was the suggestion of the development of an app to encourage anonymous reporting of drug dealing around schools:

They wouldn't tell the police, parents, teachers about this for fear of being labelled a grass amongst their school bubble. You're finished – marginalised, an outsider... But, they said they would report anonymously through an app… I think the impact of such an app, marketed at the right age groups, could be massive [.....] If you treat the schools in isolation then you can actually get the kids understanding what they can or can't do. Stop the bad things happening in the school, and you can actually make a difference – even if it's just making the school safer (Police Officer, National Diffuse).

In each of the schools, teachers discussed a range of different approaches they were taking to tackle these issues. One example was not letting pupils leave school unless they had a positive destination, creating a curriculum that the pupils were more likely to engage with, and working with colleges to help with this. More proactive development of 'counter narratives' to SOC activity could support these existing policies in a way that broadens community partnership.

Social Work and partners: supporting desistance

While prison, probation and community services were identified as a critical point of possible intervention, the challenges associated with effective reintegration, both of general offenders in these communities, and SOC offenders in particular, were formidable. As one Social Worker noted:

It's learned behaviours, because generally, generationally … you've got grandparents, parents, children, all involved …. it's very, very difficult to keep themselves away from their negative peers and, their associates. Some have made it, remarkably so, and against all the odds I would argue as well, because often, the hierarchy refuse to let them lead a pro-social life, and it's the pressure that's put on them and they eventually are sucked back into that lifestyle (Social Worker, Urban Embedded).

This pressure could be particularly acute for young people, not necessarily because SOC groups acted coercively towards them, but because their membership conferred a belonging and a status that had been notably absent from their home lives: 'It's near impossible for young people to get out of. It's almost like a family… unless you move completely away [and] you're up for a fresh start' (Social Worker, Urban Embedded).

However, whilst 'home' could present challenges in terms of limited pro-social influences, relocation to areas where the individual had no networks of familial or friendship support was seen as equally problematic and setting them up to fail. With limited exceptions, where long-term drug users might benefit from complete relocation, or where extended kinship mapping might identify more distant relations who could better support an individual, many of the professionals felt that individuals should stay in their home communities, even if these are 'in a notoriously difficult area.'

Getting an individual suitable housing was considered difficult when stretched providers were inclined to relegate the needs of individuals after release from prison as 'undeserving' and potentially a risk. However, some providers were more sympathetic to at least some categories of ex-offenders, though the negotiation and effectiveness of such transitions depended on strong working relationships between partner agencies and an investment in working with these individuals. As one social worker states:

> They've all got different things and they've all got different criteria of what they're willing to take tenancy-wise.' If you've developed a good working relationship with that housing officer and you can explain the risks, how you're going to monitor that [….] you can try and get them in that way. I've not had much difficulty getting my client group houses but it's before they're at that stage. You've got stages before you get to a stage of where they're actually looking at coming into social housing. It's trying to keep that momentum up (Social Worker, Urban Embbeded).

A further challenge to re-integration back into communities for individuals centred on interactions with the police. Frequent low-level proactive enforcement by officers (for example, stop and searches or vehicle stops), who were unprepared to leave the 'offender' alone could, in the view of one experienced police officer, do as much damage to that individual's journey towards desistance as anything else. One police respondent had been actively involved as a through-care link for youth with SOC-related convictions, not only helping negotiate the support services that such individuals needed, but also educating local officers to ensure that they exercised appropriate discretion and gave these individuals the necessary space and time to move away from an offending lifestyle.

The challenges presented by different categories of SOC were also significant. Some of the most well-known and experienced criminals were commonly characterised as 'charming' and entirely 'compliant', belying the reputation they often had amongst their rivals and debtors for ruthless violence. These individuals however presented few challenges for their criminal justice social workers; they needed no help with accommodation or welfare and merely looked to bide their time and escape their licensing conditions as quickly as possible.

In sharp contrast, those individuals involved in front-line street level drug dealing, often drug users themselves, could be tremendously challenging and time consuming to work with. The criminality of these individuals was often based on

acute vulnerability that had been exploited by their senior associates. Life histories involving family abuse and neglect, parental separation, domestic violence and substance misuse, led to individuals who were so angry, anxious and incoherent that they frequently self-excluded themselves from the help and support they desperately need. As one social worker notes:

> They're so guarded, they come in guarded… and it's so difficult to, to break down those barriers with the young men, because they've maybe, they've had parents who've been involved or whatever and it's been like 'don't trust them, don't talk to them, they're out to get you', and the building of that relationship is also, it can be difficult because you're having to break down a lot of that stigma that they've got of us, of social work (Social Worker, Semi-Urban Embedded).

Before even being able to address any of their more complex needs, often very basic needs such as nutrition, accommodation and sleeplessness had to be addressed first. Mental health was seen by many as a particular issue, with pre-existing ill health being exacerbated (and sometimes exploited) by SOC. The challenge for service providers is that the source of any client's anxiety was beyond the ability of service providers to influence or control, a perceived threat lurking back in the streets and stairwells of the client's neighbourhood.

Whilst dealing with the complex needs of ex-offenders was seen as vital, and was clearly a source of some professional pride for respondents, there was a strong resistance to reducing all problems and solutions to therapeutic activities. Whilst clients may have exhibited a range of personal issues that needed addressing, issues associated with poor housing, a lack of services and a lack of training and opportunity were seen as equally critical. A narrow focus on therapeutic programmes that seek to 'responsibilise' individuals by reducing offending to a failure to meet 'life goals' came in for particular criticism:

> Our traditional understanding of why people commit crimes or are involved in the criminal justice system are not because they're not meeting their life goals, because if they're individually not meeting their life goals there's a whole… particular communities, particular areas, and particular experiences and all the rest of it, therefore, it's structural. Therefore, the answer is in some kind of change structurally (Social Worker, Semi-Urban Embedded).

Whilst the barriers facing many clients were considerable, focussed partnership-based throughcare work from the prison onwards, could nevertheless deliver the sorts of substantive outcomes, including stable employment, that are considered critical for desistance.

Obstacles to progress

A lack of police resources was a recurring theme with statutory respondents, whether it was a lack of public contact, or regular information exchange, or intelligence meetings with partner organisations. Though there had been a recent shift back to resourcing more dedicated community policing after prior trialling of

alternative resource allocation models,[4] there was still a sense in some areas, and amongst some partners, that the capacity of the police to meaningfully engage the community was limited. One police officer talked about the 'thin blue line getting thinner, community policing and everything else – we don't have information and intelligence'.

However, whilst there were recurring observations about difficulties with community policing across all our main case study sites, it would be erroneous to simply attribute problems of police-community mistrust to recent variations in police practice. Indeed, in one of our case study areas, a police respondent suggested that a distrust and dislike of the police was 'deep rooted' and 'intergenerational'. More significantly, official statistics show that overall views of the performance of local police have been less positive among those living in the most deprived areas in Scotland in comparison with the rest of Scotland, in Scottish Crime and Justice Surveys since 2012/13[5]. (Scottish Government 2018a).

All of our main case study areas had experienced the scaling back of key statutory agencies, most notably the police and social work, in terms of an actual physical 'base' in those areas. The impact of this in relation to SOC was twofold. First, agency staff talked about a lack of community knowledge and context to their work. As one Social Worker noted from an urban embedded area notes, 'it does feel that there's a large part of the community that I don't feel connected to now, in a sense'.

But aside from the obvious challenges this could pose in terms of informed practice, diminished visibility and knowledge only served to further weaken the credibility of statutory organisations in areas where their legitimacy and authority was often already sorely tested:

> They still see the police as the enemy… with recent cuts, for us, it's places like there that suffer. There was an office, an Inspector, a Sergeant and about 8-10 cops per shift. Now, if we're lucky, there's about 4 per shift – no Sergeants, no Inspector. That's all down to cutbacks. The [SOC] group we're talking about see that as a real opportunity for them – it's not difficult to know when the cars are there. Plus, you'll find on a Friday/Saturday night… resources are brought down here (Police Officer, Urban Embedded).

A second key impact was that these communities, housing as they do some particularly vulnerable individuals, were most likely to be adversely affected by

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[4] An early pre-emptive attempt to address the challenges of austerity for policing in Scotland, was the development of the 'Integrated Service Delivery Model' (ISDM) in legacy force Strathclyde. This model, which was subsequently rolled out across many areas of Police Scotland, was associated *in some areas* with disruption to established community policing capacity and practices (Hamilton-Smith et. al., 2013)

[5] In 2016/17 a smaller proportion of those living in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland described the local police's performance as good or excellent, compared to adults in the rest of Scotland (53% compared with 59% respectively). This was consistent with SCJS findings in previous years. This question was included in the survey in 2012/13 (Scottish Government 2018a:61).

additional barriers to accessing services. This impact is partly related to the mundane issue of the cost of travelling further to access services:

> I think that [centralisation] does affect, and we hear about it. Service users will tell us about it. Sometimes it's particularly difficult, again… the financial issues that that creates in terms of people travelling to appointments. A lot of our … budget is taken up by covering the cost of people to travel here (Social Worker, Semi-Urban Embedded).

But these mundane considerations could also tip over into more serious consequences, particularly for 'at risk' and chaotic individuals who may have been reluctant to engage with services in the first place. For individuals under supervision, travelling to other communities to access services could invoke real anxiety where that journey necessitated travelling into areas perceived as hostile territory, while non-attendance at required meetings (e.g. as part of a condition of license) could also have signficant consequences:

> They've not turned up for a report because they've got no money in a phone to phone us, and that they've no bus fare to get here… so we're thinking, 'they've not turned up, letter to court, we've got a job to do,' all of those bits. The next thing, they're remanded and we're having to go to the jail to interview them, and it's like 'genuinely, I didn't have any money to get there', so they're in prison (Social Worker, Semi-Urban Embedded).

Whilst the consolidation of some offices could offer some benefits, there was a sense that the overarching driver for change was purely financial, and that the consequences for communities and client groups was often poorly thought through.

The pressures placed on services are widely felt as a consequence of recession and austerity nationally, but the case studies provided further evidence of how such efficiencies can disproportionately impact on vulnerable populations. Organisations were however starting to adapt and innovate, and find some benefits from consolidation and integration. For instance, the possibilities of using shared community spaces (e.g. centres and offices) for both service delivery and community events were being pushed further. Moreover, even where service consolidation was driven by cutbacks, these changes did throw up opportunities to work on a more joined-up basis both across traditional agency divides and with communities:

> Although the main driver is about efficiencies and managing it, I think there are ways, I think there are real opportunities to engage the community in some of these activities and some of the things that are on offer, as a result of health and social care integrating (Social Worker, Semi-Urban Embedded)

In one of our case study areas, funds had been levered in via housing partners to fund a significant additional police resource to mount community operations that focussed on front line issues of drug use and anti-social behaviour. In another area, a more sustained police resource had been part-funded by a housing provider with

the police being co-located with housing officers and working together to collect intelligence on, and address, issues of vulnerability and criminality in the housing stock.

A more systemic challenge with the management of ex-offenders and 'at risk' individuals were weaknesses and patchiness in information sharing between key agencies. This problem was particularly marked in relation to more high risk offenders, where intelligence and information that could be useful to the management of these individuals moved in a one-way flow up the police hierarchy with little information being fed down in return. Whilst practitioners often understood the police withholding information whilst they developed operations, the balance between long term police aims and the more day-to-day management of high risk individuals was not always seen as being effectively balanced.

Problems associated with these patterns of information flow included agencies and front line operatives often being unaware that key individuals posed particularly high levels of risk, with, for instance, social workers often remaining unaware that particular clients were considered to pose a threat to life or have access to firearms. At a more general practice level, even police officers in localities could feel that they were operating without an awareness of the 'bigger picture'. For social workers, this absence of a bigger picture could be more directly related to their ability to manage individuals who posed a risk to their communities:

> The information that we get is just what's on the complaint or the indictment. It's then about developing that subtlety and knowledge about how to interact with people and draw stuff out of them. It's much more about context and circumstances and I think that's probably one of the weaknesses, information-wise (Social Worker, Urban Embedded).

Whilst Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) were intended to resolve some of these issues, and allow agencies to share information confidentially to assist with the more effective management of high risk offenders, the extent to which these arrangements worked effectively to support frontline practice clearly varied, with practitioners in some areas feeling largely excluded from arrangements that they perceived as operating at a more bureaucratic level:

> we are not invited to MAPPA, as the key professional who could answer a question… that says something about how we are respected and valued, because MAPPA sees itself as the hierarchy of police, housing, children and families, the whole gambit and the idea is they are the decision making and purse holders.. but in all the cases I have had at MAPPA where we have been desperate for accommodation in the event of someone being liberated they haven't raised an eyebrow … I've never benefited from any decisions they have made that have eased a situation (Social Worker, Urban Embedded)

A further problem with this lack of effective information exchange and coordinated working is that it limited opportunities for proper consideration and debate on

options for action that might be most effective to reduce immediate harm within communities. Whilst developing long-term operations to prosecute the most senior SOC participants may be the most effective strategy in some instances, such 'kingpin' strategies have also been shown to be frequently ineffective in disrupting SOC, in particular disrupting drug-related SOC activity:

> We have had numerous action plans in relation to it, and I would genuinely say there's an attitude towards it of 'if you get the jail, you get the jail' – there will be someone else to step in to his shoes…[….] That's their lifestyle, and jail isn't an effective deterrent. I'm not saying this is everybody, but there's a mentality where it's expected and accepted. We've had numerous operations up there and it hasn't made one blind bit of difference (Police Officer, Urban Embedded).

Conversely, more mundane opportunities to disrupt SOC nominals may offer a more effective opportunity to cut short offending:

> If we had information around that and we were able to verify a lot of that, that person could be recalled to prison, which in effect could end up[…] stopping a further crime being committed…. And that's no disrespect to the police, because I do recognise that they have got wider things, but the object of their operations, if you like, is not to supply us with information. But it would, I would like to reiterate to them that often if that information, that if you could share with us, could potentially get this man off the street, because we could recall him under licence. So we don't get a lot of information at all (Social Worker, Urban Embedded).

Partnership and Empowerment

A wholly expected yet important theme emerging from the research was the importance of working in partnership to address the intractable social issues that were present in case study areas. There was less of a sense through the fieldwork that areas would benefit from any particular configuration of partners or partnership structures, but more a recurring statement of the *qualities* of partnership that were needed to achieve traction on difficult social issues. These qualities included shared goals that were backed up by genuinely shared organisational objectives and performance indicators to really incentivise joined up practice. These goals needed to be underpinned by a stable foundation for partnership working.

The potential and importance of partnership work was evident across a range of social issues touching on serious organised crime. For instance, the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice's report (CYCJ 2018, forthcoming) on preventing the exploitation of young people by SOC, points to the complex needs, life histories, and problematic family and social networks that can contribute to them being exploited and recruited into low-level activity in support of SOC. In the face of complex needs, the report recommends a welfare approach that might naturally require input and coordination across a wide range of statutory and other

supporting organisations, putting a heavy emphasis in turn on effective and co-operative partnership.

However, in our study a lack of stability in funding, relationships, and direction were constantly noted as barriers to effective progress. At a frontline level, simply knowing what resources, services and partners were out there to provide assistance with a family or a client could be challenging when this landscape was constantly changing. The fact that effectively securing help and resources in turn depended upon strong working relationships and trust made constant changes in personnel and organisations especially problematic. At the root of many of these problems remains a model whereby additional funding for addressing complex needs was routed via a convoluted web of short-term funding schemes, grants, and competitions, with funding often appearing or disappearing on the back of 'end of year' funding negotiations. The principal negatives of such an approach were, firstly, a constant change in what partners were focusing on to match new funding criteria, encouraging less partnership, absorbing significant resource and effort, and leading to more separate working, with many partners bidding for the same funding. Secondly, many partners were focusing down on 'single issues' to attract funding which did not match the complex nature of the underpinning social problems.

> Our funding dries up at the end of March… and some of the work they've done …. it's phenomenal! Huge, huge difference we make in some people's lives. And that's going to go, so what happens? What happens from here on in? So [area] didn't get into this position over 2 or 3 years, this is 40-50 years of decline, and yet you're getting 1-2 year funded projects? It's just mad (Housing Official, Urban Embedded).

Empowering the community to take more ownership and have more of a voice in the strategic direction taken by partnerships was broadly seen as a positive, and a way of giving more stabliity and focus to partnership working. Communities in our case study areas were considered to have real strengths and assets, though there was also a recognition that the embeddedness of SOC created problems that needed to be acknowledged. As one social worker stated: 'one thing the area has is a strong community spirit, not always for the good, but strong'.

Partners faced delicate decisions about which community voices or resources to use. Mistakes had been made in the past, in one case study area in particular, with using people within the community who were considered to be 'respected voices', largely on the basis of their past criminality, the logic being that their buy-in would help the community take ownership of facilities or investments. This hadn't always worked and had, on occasion, led to very dubious forms of 'ownership'.

Respondents also felt that there were more general challenges in community engagement, notably giving voice to more marginalised groups in communities (notably young people) and being realistic about the capacity of disadvantaged communities to take ownership and responsibility. This capacity required nurturing

through a continuity of effort, and through the presence of stable partners with whom the community could develop a trusting relationship.

Summary

This chapter has examined the ways in which SOC creates particular challenges for communities in terms of services and service delivery. Quite aside from the direct resources consumed in trying to tackle SOC and deal with the aftermath of its activities, the general ways in which SOC creates additional barriers of stigma, fear and mistrust between communities and service providers further diminishes the capacity for service providers to respond to other deep-rooted community issues (such as poverty and social exclusion). Whilst the current level of austerity is likely to intensify these problems, the chapter has attempted to highlight possible intervention points and promising areas of practice.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Overview

This chapter summarises key findings and offers related policy recommendations. While the study was not designed to evaluate current practice, the research design did include a community co-inquiry strand in which findings and possible strategies were discussed with a sub-sample of 33 participants and community stakeholders across the three fieldsites, including 11 community representatives, 17 statutory participants, and 6 from community justice (further detail is provided in the appendix). It was in part through these sessions that we were able to identify key implications and areas for future development.

Participants in all co-inquiry sessions endorsed the four key themes presented by the research team stemming from the study: wider disadvantage; the importance of crime 'stories'; helping vulnerable people; and barriers to service delivery. While the case study areas had traits that were similar to other communities in Scotland, however, it should be noted that these findings should not be read as a generalised picture of SOC-community relations in Scotland. While these themes were evident across the various case study locations, it is notable that there were differences in intensity between urban, semi-urban, and rural contexts. The intensity was highest in the urban embedded context and least intense in the diffuse location.

The chapter will be structured by the principal areas for recommended action, each including a brief summary of findings and recommended responses: The 5th D – developing resilient communities;[6] changing the narrative; addressing vulnerability; and broadening community partnerships.

1. Developing Resilient Communities

There was widespread agreement between all participants regarding the relationship between the embeddedness of serious organised crime and related forms of economic and social harm. All of the fieldsites experienced concentrated disadvantage, with a perception of stigma and stereotype, and with related feelings of frustration, anger and fear. The cumulative effect of these wider forms of disadvantage is a feeling of community disempowerment. This feeling of disempowerment is compounded by a lack of trust amongst some community residents in the police, and correspondingly a lack of community intelligence pertaining to organised crime. As a result of this disconnect, organised crime remains largely invisible, adding to a sense of its complexity and intractability.

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[6] The serious organised crime strategy identifies 4 key objectives: 1. to **Divert** people from becoming involved in SOC and using its products; 2. to **Deter** SOC groups by supporting private, public and third sector organisations to protect themselves and each other 3; to **Detect**, identify and prosecute those involved in SOC and 4; to **Disrupt** SOC groups. (Scottish Government 2015a)

Disadvantage provides the conditions that allow organised crime to flourish. Enduring levels of social and economic exclusion create populations with high levels of need and high levels of demand for state services, making them disproportionately vulnerable in the face of service and welfare cuts. Organised crime moves quickly to capitalise on these gaps and deficits, exploiting the vulnerable as victims and as low-level perpetrators.

Despite a clear need for improvement in services and opportunities, in all areas community residents demonstrated a strong level of attachment to, and investment in, their local area. In each case there were local groups and organisations that worked hard to engage with young people, to challenge stigma, and to create community cohesion. This was often hampered by lack of funding, investment and recognition.

Even in more remote, outlying areas, where SOC groups were not locally embedded, concentrations of drug use – with the associated reputational damage to those communities – was perceived as a threat to the future prospects and prosperity of these areas.

Recommendations

The current SOC strategy is framed by four strategic principles: Divert, Deter, Detect and Disrupt. This study recommends the addition of a fifth D – Develop – which is premised on community development as a means of responding to the harms associated with organised crime. Specifically, this should focus on developing community resources and local policing models to enable the gathering of community intelligence and increased trust in the police and other key service providers.

Community development should not be premised on tackling organised crime as a panacea to a community's problems, but rather, based on the assertion that efforts to tackle bigger issues of structural disadvantage are liable to fail if the barrier of organised crime is not tackled in parallel.

This approach recognises that the best asset in responding to organised crime is the community itself. Individuals involved in harmful, exploitative or coercive practices are deeply intertwined with the majority of law-abiding residents via families, friendships and other social connections. The implications of this should be further explored to help frame prevention, policing, and other responses which balance building opportunities for all in communities with rehabilitation and social support.

This cannot be achieved without corresponding investment in good place-based empowerment and planning, something which is understood in policy terms but often not accompanied by economic investment. This study suggests that grassroots, community-level work should be prioritised, rather than being led from outside the community. Organised crime should not be the only conversation in community development, but neither should it be avoided through an exclusive focus on more positive 'assets'.

2. Changing the Narrative

The study found a strong narrative supporting the persistence of organised crime in all case-study areas that was repeated among local residents and service providers but to a lesser extent those with lived experience of organised criminal activity. While local service providers saw the logic of participation clearly – 'flash cars', ready cash, and local prestige – the reality for those with lived experience was that only very few individuals attained material success without detriment.

The narrative presented in favour of organised crime is powerful and persuasive, particularly in communities with low levels of trust in the police and other state agencies, and this narrative is often supported by the media. This narrative presents an alternative way of envisaging the world in opposition to legitimate society, and has roots in truths about experience of disadvantage and myths about how it can transform relative life chances.

However, the study also identified an important counter-narrative. Organised crime results in a range of significant and enduring individual-level harms to those involved, ranging from victimisation and coercion to imprisonment and addiction, involving violent and often chaotic lifestyles. The likelihood of long-term success was comparatively low, with lower-level dealers used as 'cannon fodder' to support profits enjoyed higher up the food chain, often by those residing in more affluent areas. In addition, the study found that organised crime contributed to and exacerbated issues such as stigma, exclusion, and disempowerment at a community level.

Recommendations

At a national level, challenging the narrative of organised crime demands two shifts: first, a shift in presenting the issue as solely the preserve of law enforcement to one for the community at large; and, second, a shift in presenting organised crime as solely an issue for socially and economically disadvantaged communities to one that extends its reach to all areas of society, including those affluent communities where many 'successful' organised criminals reside.

At a community level, effectively challenging the organised crime narrative requires investment in a coherent, authentic and effectively targeted counter-narrative. This is likely to involve work which gathers the stories of those with lived experience of SOC and shares them as a preventative strategy in face to face contexts such as schools and through other means such as social media.

At an individual level, service delivery involving casework with convicted offenders, young people, and individuals on the 'cusp' of organised crime, should emphasise the distance between myth and reality in the narrative of organised crime at key transition points. Specifically, case work with young people identified as being vulnerable to SOC recruitment should be prioritised (for a recent overview see CYCJ 2018). Services such as diversionary youth work also need to be sustainably funded, credible and sufficiently attractive to provide a real alternative.

3. Addressing Vulnerability

A key finding from the study was that a strength of organised crime in communities was the knowledge of the 'landscape of vulnerability' in the local area – debt, addiction, ill-health, lack of family support, old age – and the ways in which these could be exploited by enlisting vulnerable individuals in illicit activity. In many cases this resulted in further debt, and a vicious cycle of harm.

The case study areas demonstrated high levels of vulnerability, offering a range of opportunities for exploitation. This knowledge of local vulnerability was supported by a flexible understanding of the changing structures of service provision and state support, and the ability to exploit new opportunities.

These coerced actions ranged from relatively small-scale activities, such as the watching of a 'bag', to larger-scale activities such as taking over the property of a vulnerable resident and using it as a base for criminal trade. In one case, fears of the financial impact of the bedroom tax among residents was used by local SOC groups to exploit older people and utilise their homes for criminal activity.

Drug prevention work was widely perceived as being too narrowly focused on older heroin-using/methadone-maintained drug users, with more emergent recreational and poly-drug markets not being effectively tackled. In particular, social media-facilitated school-based dealing was a frequent concern.

In the case of vulnerable migrant populations, exploitation was often hidden within particular populations, making it hard to identify and address. This challenge was compounded by an inability of victims to recognise or acknowledge their own exploitation; and sometimes weak relationships between migrant populations and the wider communities in which they were resident.

Recommendations

Local service providers dealing with various forms of vulnerability – particularly housing and social work – should develop strategies focused on the prevention of exploitation of vulnerable residents. Mapping and targeting support to the most vulnerable is a viable strategy with potential to create a significant prevention dividend. Partnership working and information-sharing on the issue of vulnerability and exploitation should form a key part of this strategy.

This requires a step-change in the way in which organised crime is envisaged: from a hidden phenomenon that is the sole responsibility of the police, to a public issue that is the responsibility of society at large. Communicating the ways in which vulnerable individuals are routinely exploited may be one way of creating this level of awareness.

Consideration should be given to legislative responses to create greater powers to respond to exploitation. One possible route would be to create a criminal offence of 'coercive control' similar to the recent UK legislation (2015: 3) on domestic violence: 'a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.'

The current focus on harm reduction and health education in drug policy and practice is welcome but needs to be strengthened and broadened out to take proper stock of rapidly diversifying drug markets and drug using populations.

Given uncertainties in the current political and economic environment, and how this may impact on existing migrant populations in Scotland in the near future, careful monitoring is required of labour markets given the scope for exploitation of migrants to increase if labour shortages grow after the UK's probable departure from the European Union.

4. Broadening Community Partnership

The study demonstrated that despite hard work on behalf of all service providers, there were serious and significant barriers to effective service provision across police, social work, schools and housing. A lack of stability in funding and relationships were constantly noted as barriers to effective progress. These problems were rooted in a situation in which funding for addressing complex community needs involved a web of short-term funding schemes, with funding often appearing or disappearing rapidly.

While community organisations and statutory agencies worked on issues relevant to organised crime interventions, these were frequently framed in a different way; organised crime was seen largely as a 'police' rather than a

community issue. As a result, there was both a disconnect in the identification of, and response to, organised crime among community and statutory partners. The fact that effectively securing help and resources in turn depended upon strong working relationships and trust made constant changes in personnel and organisations especially problematic.

A comparable level of disconnect was identified in information and intelligence-sharing between agencies. Housing services in particular were found to be a key source of local intelligence, and schools a key point of intervention, but with little internal coordination. This disconnect was exacerbated in some cases by the removal of key service offices, including police stations and social work offices, from the local area; resulting in a weakening of community-level knowledge.

Recommendations

A coordinated police, community and statutory partnership approach to organised crime is required to enable the development of cohesive forms of intervention and responses. A key focus of this work should involve broadening community partnerships to help reduce the risks of involvement in organised crime: notably through partnerships between families, mentors, and schools. A central feature of this should involve investment in preventative community services, particularly in community and campus policing models, as key facilitators and organisers.

Preventing organised crime and mitigating its effects requires good universal service provision, most notably education and youth work. This package of embedded response requires an enduring infrastructure including physical focal points like community spaces, services mitigating social exclusion and poverty, and processes for empowerment and dialogue.

Improved partnership working and information sharing should be prioritised, with organised crime acting as a 'red thread' that connects local service provision. Improving links between community justice and other community based planning solutions could involve integrating locality planning with services such as employability, work with ex-offenders, and services dealing with addiction or mental health. These partnerships should prioritise shared goals that are backed up by genuinely shared organisational objectives and performance indicators to incentivise joined up practice.

A key part of achieving joined-up practice must include developing more effective models of working, between national resources configured to tackle organised crime (i.e. partner agencies co-located at the Scottish Crime Campus), and more local service providers. Operations by national agencies should not be developed or implemented in isolation from considerations of community plans and impacts.

Summary

This report has presented the findings of the first study of the community experiences of Serious Organised Crime (SOC) in Scotland, based on a detailed, qualitative case-study approach involving 188 participants. The study has significantly extended the knowledge-base pertaining to organised crime in Scotland, both in terms of understanding community experiences in areas where SOC is embedded, and in communities impacted by more diffuse and mobile forms of SOC.

SOC has deep roots in Scotland and extends its corrosive reach into a wide range of communities, businesses, and institutions. To date, SOC activity has been approached principally as a policing problem. While recognising the pivotal role of policing, the study suggests that tackling the deep roots of SOC effectively requires a broader set of partnerships, involving both statutory agencies and local community groups.

The step-change in working practices suggested by this shift is not straightforward and will require both strong leadership and a willingness to listen. The starting point, however, is the very real and enduring forms of harm, victimisation and indebtedness revealed in this report. Only by shining a light on an issue that is often in the shadows, or is distorted through the glare of media glamourisation and dubious forms of celebrity, can real and effective responses be formulated. This report aims to make a contribution to this important endeavour.

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Appendix A: Enhancing Meaning & Improving Impact – Findings of the Co-inquiry Sessions

Scottish Community Development Centre

1. Methodology

Purpose: This approach used interim analysis of interview data to stimulate group discussion in order to clarify and build on the patterns in the material from the core fieldwork and provide some triangulation of the findings. It involved bringing some of those interviewed in the study, together with local community planning & community justice stakeholders to:

- hear an accessible overview of findings and explore their resonance to inform data analysis.

- use this overview in a front-line context to consider what shifts in practice, policy or broader community responses could help prevent crime, tackle its social determinants or help communities deal with its impact.

- utilise these insights and proposals to inform the conclusions and recommendations of the report.

Recruitment of Participants: Three co-inquiries were organised across the case-study areas, including one 'Urban, Embedded', one 'Semi-Urban Embedded' and one 'National Diffuse'. This report covers the output of all three sessions. Scottish Community Development Centre worked with participants from each area including local residents, staff in community based or third sector projects, and staff in statutory agencies including teachers, social workers, housing staff, youth workers or police officers. The table below provides a breakdown of participants in the three sites.

Field site type	Community Representatives	Statutory or third sector agencies	Community Justice Partnerships Reps	Totals
Urban Embedded (UE)	5	3	2	10
Semi Urban embedded (SUE)	3	3	2	7
National diffuse (ND)	3*	11	2	16

*In this session community representatives were local councillors

Participants were identified in consultation with the research team who nominated those likely to be willing and able to participate in the sessions. Attempts were made to maintain a balance of participants in line with the overall research aims. The invitation was extended to a cross-section of participants from the study, as well as nominated others from within Community Justice Partnerships.

Staff in relevant community planning and community justice co-ordination roles were also invited, irrespective of whether they had been interviewed in the earlier phase, to explore issues related to strengthening key operational links between communities, Community Justice Partnerships and wider community planning. The purpose of these invitations was to support links envisaged in the Community Justice (Scotland) Act 2016 and the subsequent implementation of its local community justice model as described in Community Justice Outcome Improvement Plans.

The process: A presentation was delivered by lead researchers and SCDC staff. This restated the research aims and provided an overview of the methods used. It summarised and presented emerging themes at the time of the co-inquiry which were categorised as follows:

- Wider Disadvantage – how it can create conditions for crime
- Importance of Stories – Which attract people to get involved in serious organised crime
- Vulnerable People – And how they are used / exploited by serious organised criminals
- Services and related policy – And their effectiveness in combating crime

These themes were illustrated with relevant quotations from the draft report and an additional description of views expressed in the interviews to provide participants with an overview of the nature of responses. The presentation of findings provided a starting point for further discussion on the issues and how they might be addressed.

Facilitation Methods: SCDC facilitated the sessions using techniques for collective reflection based on an initial analysis of the interview data. This involved using two facilitated group exercises. In the first participants reflected on content of the findings in terms of authenticity and resonance. In each case the collective view was supportive of the findings. The second exercise focused on future community, policy or practice responses. Each theme was discussed in turn with participants asked to identify what actions they believed they needed more of, less of and what could be done differently.

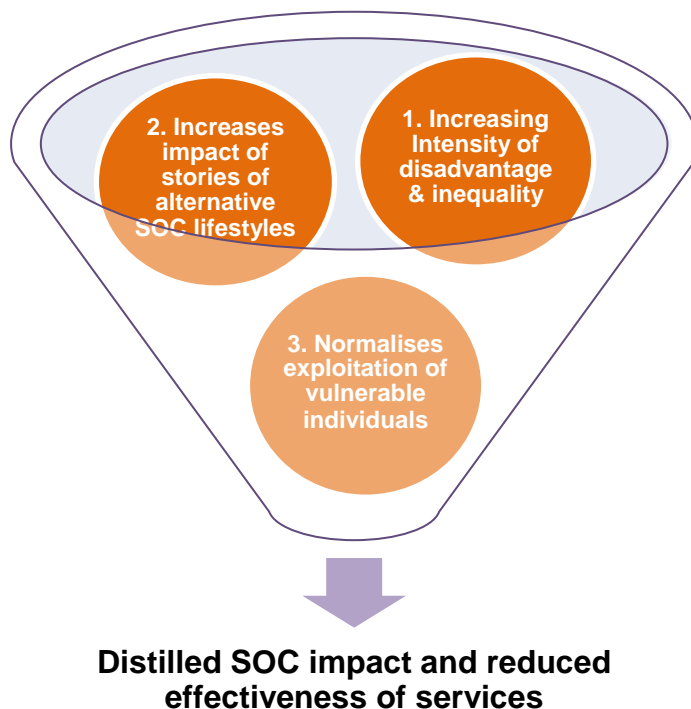# 2. Overview of Co-inquiry findings

Resonance: The four themes resonated deeply with those participating, although in every location the point was made that it is a minority who engage in criminal activity – including those who also experience very significant poverty and disadvantage.   Additional depth was achieved via structured collective discussion which helped participants to frame ideas and develop solutions for the future. Overlaps in participants' reflections across the themes demonstrated that participants viewed them as closely inter-related in practice and that in order to achieve change some core concerns needed to be emphasised wherever opportunities would allow.

Preventative focus: The co-inquiry participants were less focused on detection and punishment than may have been expected given the severity of the effects SOC has on communities. In fact, there were no responses from participants which focused on increased sentencing or harsher treatment of those committing crime. Whilst this may speak to the nature of the sample it also appears to reflect a sophistication in the contemporary community and institutional responses. These highlighted the importance of how SOC is socially constructed and the implications of this for reducing crime by tackling the mechanisms which nurture and replicate it. The emphasis in the discussions tended to focus on the need for Police and other services to work more closely with communities by addressing these social determinants and their effects at community level.

Differences Between the Areas: Across the different types of site described in the research the co-inquiries confirmed that while people found the four key-themes useful, there were differences of emphasis. However, there seems no doubt that although disadvantage, unrealistic SOC stories and exploitation of vulnerability are important causal factors in all sites and are systemically linked to each other, as illustrated in **Fig 1**, it is the intensity of this experience of multiple disadvantage that creates the biggest challenges for services and policy development. This intensity was highest in the urban embedded context and least intense in the national diffuse location.

Each site exhibited differences in levels of confidence and ability to respond depending on how the four themes interacted locally with 'real world variables'. These included - the prevalence of SOC activity, levels of realistic access to work, contemporary industrial decline in high wage industries, consequent impacts on educational attainment and the quality of services and community infrastructure. The co-inquiry findings and further use of this four theme model seems to offer potentially accessible starting points for dialogue on how local people and staff working locally could accurately assess local SOC conditions, improve services and initiate community action which could make a difference.

Fig 1 Systemic links between the themes

2. Increases impact of stories of alternative SOC lifestyles

1. Increasing Intensity of disadvantage & inequality

3. Normalises exploitation of vulnerable individuals

Distilled SOC impact and reduced effectiveness of services

3. Summary of Output on Key Themes

Wider Disadvantage

Participant reported experience in the sites confirms that higher levels of disadvantage - and real experience of inequality, deepen the propensity for involvement in SOC for a significant minority of those living there, particularly younger men. Reductions in individual life chances for these individuals and their wider social group were deeply embedded in the urban sites. This intensified feelings of powerlessness which in turn increased the likelihood of some people looking outside of established norms to make a living. This included turning away from legal employment, which was often difficult or impossible to achieve, to work in the informal or illegal economy in order to   earn a reasonable income in line with their aspirations. Whilst few participants endorsed this course of action, most recognised it as understandable given the conditions facing those involved.

Non SOC engaged residents in these areas also experienced disadvantage created by the same conditions and exacerbated by the stigma which accompanies the cycle of inequality, alienation, poverty and crime. Perspectives differed regarding the inevitability of links between disadvantage and crime but participants were agreed that structural disadvantage was an important part of the explanation.

Despite the ubiquity of disadvantage across the co-inquiry sites creating the conditions for serious organised crime to take root locally, it is the multiple and enduring disadvantage evident in the Urban Embedded (UE) category that is a key exacerbating factor. This arises from real and demonstrable obstacles for individuals and families to access secure employment and a reasonable standard of living. The impact of being unable to do so increases vulnerability to getting involved with criminal activity. Participants described a range of interlocking factors which led to a visceral sense of hopelessness and despair driving behaviours which were illegal, anti-social and therefore "anti-community".

In the UE site SOC was viewed by many participants as a major employer, as influential as legitimate employers are in other communities. In this sense it seemed that SOC institutions had filled gaps vacated by the legitimate economy in areas of intense post-industrial decline, or where urban planning had never fully succeeded in creating enough meaningful employment in the first place.

It is the severity of these conditions operating together which affect the gradient of the "slippery slope" described by some participants. This affects people on the fringes of getting involved in organised crime and seeking to find a way to turn away from these influences. These more overt structural factors and the resultant conditions for SOC growth was also felt to affect the success or failure of intervention to tackle multiple disadvantage as a whole. Whilst some practice and policy interventions would claim to address these, the co-inquiry participants suggest that many current responses are insufficient.

In the 'National Diffuse' field sites, the impact of poverty on factors such as educational engagement and attainment was also present, particularly as a result of rapid decline in key local industries. Whilst the effects of this were as significant on affected individuals as in the other sites the concentrations of poverty relative to the population as a whole were less. This distribution, although highly concentrated locally sometimes in a few streets, is less likely to blight localities as a whole but does tend to stigmatise particular neighbourhoods in similar, if less intensive, ways than in urban contexts.

Paradoxically, the drug market in these areas was characterised by demand from those on both low and high incomes – although it was generally not locally supplied. This was felt by co-inquiry participants to create complexity in the local determinants and the related SOC stories and understanding these nuances needed to frame the responses to vulnerability and service development in ways were quite different in some respects to the more urban locations.

The role of stories

Across the co-inquiries it was felt that understanding the power of SOC narratives is essential. This is due to both the real experiences of disadvantage, and the myths about how SOC can transform life chances and bring about a better life. The extent to which these stories motivate people's "choices" was felt not to have been effectively understood or challenged. Those suffering as a result therefore include not only victims but also SOC actors. Participants articulated a need to take

disadvantage seriously as a major part of the story, whilst exposing the fact that the myths of SOC mask high attrition rates in terms of how few people really benefit from it and for how long. This included highlighting the impact of violence and the expendability of those in low level SOC positions.

Therefore, SOC myths both frame aspirations for some and obscure the harshest realities of SOC lifestyles for others. Exploitation of vulnerability was also viewed as more likely either by manipulating vulnerable people to engage in low level crime, as part of personal survival strategies, or by selling involvement in SOC as one of the few available means for vulnerable young people to achieve a lifestyle they desire. This was often based on distorted ideas of what 'role models' engaged in various forms of criminality are earning. This insight demonstrated how the impact of stories and exploitation of vulnerability are deeply connected.

This narrative was notably less intensively experienced in the national diffuse site as a result of two key factors. The first is that fewer people are affected by the type of multiple disadvantage that blight neighbourhoods in the urban embedded category making them less susceptible to the SOC narrative as a way out of poverty, and secondly because of the realities of the drug supply network.

Participants felt that targeting the narrative requires understanding of its role in creating new social norms amongst some groups in communities committing and tolerating crime. This understanding needs to include how stories and peer pressure can transmit, reinforce and replicate the myths of SOC as a means to achieve material or social status. Effectively challenging these myths requires investment in a coherent, authentic and effectively targeted counter-narrative. This is likely to involve work which gathers the stories of those involved, maps these against more accurate real-world consequences and seeks to profile and share them as a preventative strategy.

Participants were clear that achieving this is only likely if those currently affected by SOC as victims or offenders are part of the authentic voices who are supported to help combat its inaccuracies and provide the lived experiences which helps people make more informed personal and social choices. This should include work to create modes of gathering and transmitting real stories and their consequences to those at risk of becoming involved. This could usefully be done at key points of transition in schools and youth work environments and in work on addictions, employability, or with low level offenders. This will require skilled activity to build trust and gather experiences using oral and social history approaches which could help 'immunise' communities against the worst of the myths which characterise this landscape. This needs to happen in face to face contexts and through other means such as social media, to challenge the glamorising narrative which is sometimes characteristic of the mainstream media.

The importance of vulnerability

The extent to which vulnerability is consciously used by SOC organisations is recognised but not well understood in communities in terms of its sophistication. Improving understanding of this could help mitigate its impact. Participants were

very aware of the overall practice of exploitation but much less so of the variety of contexts where it took place in terms of making use of those least able to defend themselves (such as older people, those with mental health issues or those with serious addiction and other health issues).

There may be mileage in actively mobilising collective community resistance to SOC, partly utilising the anger at the exploitation of vulnerability. This would also involve capturing and sharing new stories which expose the ways in which SOC uses people for its own ends. Mapping and targeting support to the most vulnerable was felt to be a viable strategy. It was considered that this could have positive personal outcomes for those supported and the potential to create a significant prevention dividend by reducing SOC opportunities for exploitation of those who are vulnerable. Techniques of awareness raising on this issue, such as those employed to raise awareness of other adult protection issues, was felt to be potentially useful as were greater links between work to combat SOC and other community based health and social care initiatives on addiction.

This preventative approach needs to be combined with targeted support which can recognise and respond to the needs of those already vulnerable or currently being exploited. Participants felt strongly that achieving this holistic approach to tackling vulnerability requires learning from previous experience in communities. There was felt to be a need for investment, and understanding of the impact of disinvestment, in terms of services supporting those with mental health issues or other key local services supporting young people at key life stages.

Work locally to develop and position positive visions of community with effective role models underpinning these was also seen as essential in securing an appropriate counter narrative. Also identified as important was ensuring that more generic services such as housing and or employability services were responding appropriately to vulnerability. This included issues such as effectively regulating rogue SOC landlords or reviewing the operation of eviction for conviction policies which can deliver people to the most vulnerable situations and move problems from one area to another.

Service and Policy developments

Much of the discussion on services focused on the importance of developing, strengthening or securing community involvement and partnership infrastructure, suggesting that a focus on community based *developmental* activity to enable these connections could form a useful fifth **D** within the strategic approach to tackling SOC**.** This could augment and enable key aspects of the existing SOC strategic categorisations of **Divert, Deter, Disrupt** and **Detect**. In all of the sites there was both a strong commitment to interagency working and a strong desire to involve local community infrastructure. Participants felt that preventing SOC and mitigating its effects required both very good universal service provision (e.g. education and youth work which would divert people from getting involved), and cognisance of the social determinants which grow SOC. It also needs to support those already involved to turn away from SOC. Such services e.g. diversionary youth work, need to be sustainably funded, credible and sufficiently attractive to provide a real

alternative to what can be seen as exciting experiences linked to SOC. Whilst getting people while they are young is something of a cliché – it is utterly pertinent in the transition points when young people are forming their identities and trying to make their way in the world as young adults. Effective and trusted local services which young people feel positive about, and are sustainable can make a real difference to outcomes. Investment in these is thought to be crucial in communities.

Participants have suggested that the package of required responses needed to create an enduring infrastructure that has a number of key elements including:

- Physical focal points like community spaces, services mitigating social exclusion and poverty, and processes for empowerment and dialogue.
- Investment in building community solidarity and involving communities in the design and delivery of relevant services (e.g. youth work, addiction services and support for those who have offended).
- Community based service evaluation would greatly enhance the effectiveness of services. This would require better relationships with communities either specifically in the context of community justice issues, or in the context of broader more preventative place based responses described above and building on existing assets in communities.
- Corresponding investment in good generic place based planning informed by the views and ideas of local people.
- Locally based integration of planning processes such as Community Planning, Community Justice, Children and Young Peoples Services and Health and Social Care planning.
- Realistic investment in the social and economic infrastructure, even in places where improvements in the physical environment have been achieved.
- Preventative services e.g. community policing, pastoral care teaching or community wardens need to be afforded more stability and higher professional status than some participants felt they did currently in organisational hierarchies. This is in order to maintain local commitment to them and a continuity in their impact by stable staff deployment where trust and good relationships can flourish.

In all sites, participants emphasised the negative impact of recent cuts and austerity and the need to focus on working with the coming generation of young people to ensure access to sustainable work and educational opportunities. In many cases these opportunities would need to be created in recognition of their current absence or inaccessibility for some communities.

Understanding the real scale and experience of SOC locally in communities is essential to responding preventatively and in supporting those whose lives are already enmeshed with SOC enterprises. This will require deeper understanding of how SOC actors can be deeply intertwined with the majority of law abiding residents via families, friendship groups and other social connections. The implications of this and other issues should be further explored and frame prevention, policing and other responses. At the same time this should be

balanced with building opportunities for all in communities, including rehabilitation and social support for offenders seeking a route out.

Finally, the intensity of the engagement described in these co-inquires suggest potential for engaging people in more powerful social learning using approaches such as community-led action research which could build on these initial conversations, deepen insights and help design better services. This could be transformative in understanding the complexity of the issues and developing and testing local solutions. This could augment existing dialogue and bring a wider array of participants to the table as this appears to have been highly valued by participants in this process. We suggest that steps to capitalise on this should be encouraged in the wake of the research and the findings utilised to continue the dialogue:

- Between local people and the emerging Community Justice partnerships
- And to feed into a richer dialogue between the Serious Organised Crime Taskforce and communities themselves.

Highly localised, preventative planning is the focus of the Community Empowerment Scotland Act 2015 and the links between it and other specific local planning processes are acknowledged in its statutory guidance. Joint activity between these processes is still at an early stage locally, and the focus on the issues afforded by the co-inquiry process was felt, by participants, to have potential to aid future collaboration. In all cases verbal commitments to follow this up were made at the events which could aid further innovation in tackling crime in future.

4. Sample Co-inquiry outputs - Insights and proposals for action from the sessions

Notes from the co-inquiry exercises have been recorded for each stage of the discussion. The notes were reproduced as faithfully as possible but some interpretation was required. These notes have been retained for use if the dialogue with communities initiated in the research is continued by the Taskforce. Key outputs relating to the community-led proposals on vulnerability are included as an example of the type of observations made by participants.

In relation to vulnerability, participants identified the following in terms of the need for:

Urban Embedded

- Mapping of vulnerability at community level – perhaps involving wider range of services e.g. housing associations.
- Targeting and engaging directly with those likely to be vulnerable in order to focus resources towards them.
- Vetting of private landlords – establish who owns the roof over people's heads and whether they are fit to do so.
- Learn from mistakes such as removal of funding to key local services and supporting vulnerable people.

- Better understanding of young people in vulnerable areas and what their needs are.
- Ensuring young people can get involved in community processes and have a say.
- Improve/defend community-based mental health programmes.
- Ensuring vulnerable people can access employment opportunities, training & development, family learning and advice services.
- Mentoring services through schools which engage vulnerable young people at key times.
- Community champions promoting positive role models in communities.
- More of the essential youth diversion work aimed at children and young people in precarious or other vulnerable situations.
- Less uncritical acceptance of services that do not meet local needs.
- Fewer qualification-based job adverts which exclude vulnerable people by not valuing life skills.
- Work to reduce community acceptance that violence (or threat of) is just a part of living in a community/ housing scheme.
- One-to-one issue based support for vulnerable people especially younger people e.g. on housing, education, addictions**.**
- A comprehensive family learning strategy which is community-based.
- Realignment of responsibilities of agencies to encourage more flexible responses i.e. police supporting tenancy support and housing officers providing policing intelligence, would need to allow use of less punitive measures prior to arrest to divert behaviours and support vulnerable people to achieve changes in their lives.
- Including the use of formal and less formal restorative justice.

Semi Urban Embedded

- Building individual and collective social resilience.
- Creating tangible opportunities for more vulnerable young people: education, employment, empowerment.
- Training for all agencies to help identity when individuals are vulnerable and how that impacts on them using awareness raising approaches, similar to that successfully used to highlight the needs of other vulnerable adults such as those with learning disabilities.
- Investment in development and realisation of personal power + control.
- Strengthening connections with other services e.g. early years.
- Mentoring services for communities.
- Sharing research, evidence and what works with the public.
- Supporting of self-community policing.
- Focusing on young people's education.
- Improving opportunities post offence & conviction.
- More restorative justice approaches in communities.
- Ensuring significant community involvement in reintegration.
- Carry on this kind of dialogue in the community.
- Counter government policy which disempowers individuals.

National Diffuse

- More visibility of support services with community safety wardens in vulnerable communities (especially at times when communities feel less safe e.g. night-time)
- Promotion of specific information on SOC vulnerability to general public
- Better understanding of the causes, patterns of abuse and social impact of vulnerability among service partners is needed.
- Vigilant analysis of administrative data e.g. who requires crisis loans and why - to help identify those who are vulnerable and in need of support.
- Adequate and accessible mental health services to protect vulnerable people and act preventatively is under resourced.
- Relationships are key to reaching vulnerable people – investment in the model of intensive and assertive approach to engaging vulnerable adults should be implemented.
- Without a shared understanding, we cannot expect community members to accept people with convictions back into communities.
- Early identification of vulnerable children of 'functioning drug users' should be initiated to target wellbeing support and early intervention.
- Earlier intervention generally prior to crisis point should be a key organising principle for services.
- May require services to re-balance priorities e.g. less emphasis on child protection, more emphasis on building family support leading to greater resilience before crisis points are reached.
- More varied and imaginative therapeutic alternatives to clinical treatments for drug misuse are required – people need more than being on a 20-year methadone script.

Different starting points which are needed include;
- Developing ways to connect with those not used to engaging with services – based on developing trust.
- Increased universal support mechanisms to avoid labelling by targeting services.
- Different attitudes to the co-existence of issues like drug misuse/mental health and how this frames when/which services should be involved or take the lead are needed. The aim should be more effective ownership of issues by services irrespective of presenting priorities. It should be the increasing vulnerability of the service user which is the trigger for action.

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