

An inspection of the south-east regional response to serious and organised crime (August 2024)

Report: [An inspection of the south-east regional response to serious and organised crime](#)

Response from: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle of Wight

We welcome the HMICFRS (His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services) report on the inspection of the South-East region and associated police forces response to serious and organised crime (SOC). The findings provide crucial insights into the regional approach to addressing one of the most complex and evolving threats to public safety.

SOC poses significant risks to communities, impacting people through a range of criminal activities, including drug trafficking, human trafficking, cybercrime, and violent crime. A comprehensive, coordinated, and well-resourced response is essential to combat these threats and protect our communities.

Key Observations:

- 1. Positive Regional Collaboration:** We are pleased that the report highlights strong collaboration between Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary (HIOWC) and the South East Regional Organised Crime Unit (SEROUCU). This multi-agency cooperation has enhanced intelligence sharing, operational coordination, and resource pooling. Working together at a regional level enables a more effective response to the sophisticated and often cross-border nature of organised crime.
- 2. Operational Successes:** The report recognises several successful operations that have disrupted organised crime groups (OCGs) operating in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight (HIOW). Targeted interventions, particularly in tackling drug trafficking, firearms offences, and cybercrime, have been effective.
- 3. Challenges in Resourcing and Capacity:** Despite operational successes, the report highlights the ongoing challenge of resource allocation. HIOWC face increasing demands as organised crime continues to grow in scale and complexity. Ensuring that sufficient resources, including staffing and technology, are available to support long-term investigations remains critical. We echo the report's call for a review of regional resourcing to ensure forces can meet the rising challenges of serious and organised crime.
- 4. Focus on Financial Crime and Modern Slavery:** The report underscores the need to enhance capabilities in tackling financial crime and modern slavery—two areas where organised criminal activity continues to thrive. While HIOW have made progress in these areas, further investment in specialist skills and investigative resources is necessary. Organised crime networks often exploit financial systems, and a stronger focus on disrupting these operations is crucial.
- 5. Community Impact and Public Engagement:** The harmful effects of SOC are felt deeply within communities, particularly vulnerable groups who are often targeted by OCGs. The

report highlights the importance of community engagement in identifying and preventing organised crime. Strengthening ties between law enforcement and the community will help build trust and encourage information sharing, which is vital for effective crime prevention and victim support.

While the South-East region is graded as good, HIOWC has been graded as inadequate following the assessment made by HMICFRS around the forces need to make sure it fully understands the threats from serious and organised crime affecting its communities, and shares information about serious and organised crime across the workforce. As Police and Crime Commissioner I continue to support my Chief Constable in working to keep our communities safe and acknowledge the efforts already made by the force in addressing this.

Looking Ahead:

We are committed to addressing the challenges outlined in the HMICFRS report and will continue working closely with our partners across the South East to strengthen our response to SOC. HIOWC remain dedicated to safeguarding our communities from the threats posed by these criminal networks.

In light of the report, we have identified the following key priorities:

- **Resourcing and Capacity Building:** We will work with regional and national agencies to address the resourcing challenges identified. By investing in our capacity to investigate and disrupt organised crime, we can ensure that HIOWC are better equipped to meet the demands of the evolving criminal landscape.
- **Specialist Investigative Capabilities:** Strengthening our focus on tackling financial crime and modern slavery will be a priority. We will seek to enhance our investigative capabilities by investing in specialist training, technology, and multi-agency cooperation in these areas.
- **Community Engagement and Prevention:** Our commitment to protecting vulnerable individuals and preventing organised crime from taking root in our communities remains unwavering. We will increase efforts to engage with local communities, build trust, and encourage the reporting of criminal activities that could be linked to organised crime networks.
- **Cross-Border Collaboration:** We will continue to enhance our collaboration with regional, national, and international law enforcement partners to combat organised crime networks that operate across borders. Intelligence sharing, joint operations, and coordinated strategies are essential for dismantling these complex criminal enterprises.

This inspection report further emphasises the importance of collaboration, resourcing, and community engagement to tackle serious and organised crime effectively. I will continue to work with my Chief Constable to remain committed to rebuilding and strengthening trust and confidence in policing for our local communities.

Donna Jones
Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Response from: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary welcomes the independent view provided by HMICFRS following the SE Regional Response to Serious and Organised Crime inspection in 2023. The Constabulary are disappointed with the overall force grading of “inadequate”, but recognise that this was a reflection of the observations from the inspection team as a snap-shot in time over a year ago. Alongside the individual force grading, the regional response to SOC as a whole was assessed as being “good”, with Hampshire & the Isle of Wight Constabulary playing a key role in that.

It is notable that the inspection of the force took place over a year ago during a significant period of change, involving new strategic priorities and a new operating model. These were designed to forge closer links between officers and local communities - proactively responding to local need; and improve our response to pursuing offenders of crime; and enhance the service provided to victims. At the time of the inspection the new operating model changes were in the early stages of implementation. The Inspectorate was therefore not able to effectively assess the impact of these changes on our service delivery and the improvements already underway could not be taken into account in the inspection report. We are confident that were the review to happen now there would be evidence of significant change, accompanied by a commitment to continuous improvement within this area of business.

We have reviewed the findings of the HMICFRS inspection report in detail and have developed a robust and ambitious improvement plan to strengthen our approach to Serious and Organised Crime. We are also currently developing a five year SOC strategy to align nationally with the NPCC (National Police Chiefs Council) strategy and national performance framework. Oversight of this critical work is provided from within the force governance structure which now includes a SOC governance board led by a Chief Superintendent.

The inspectorate positively identified that Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary has three well-resourced specialist Serious and Organised Crime investigation teams and, at the time of the inspection had recently established four local proactive units. Whilst these are critical to the delivery of our priorities, we have also been improving how serious organised crime is recognised as an all-force response. Within our improvement work we have developed more defined links between specialist officers and local policing teams. A key part of this is improving local officer understanding of SOC threats within their area and supporting them to address community concerns related to issues such as drug related harm caused by organised crime gangs.

The inspectorate also spoke favourably of how HIOWC collaborate with partner agencies to tackle the key issues which impact our communities. This is, in part, delivered through a dedicated SOC partnership co-ordinator, who is able to identify individual and community vulnerabilities to protect victims and prevent risk of serious and organised crime. A further example is Operation Fortress which aims to tackle drug-related violence and safeguard victims of cuckooing. This sees local police officers working with partners, such as local councils and the British Transport Police, to tackle these issues.

A critical element of our response has been to create greater capacity within our intelligence functions. To achieve this, we have created a specialised Intelligence and Serious and Organised Crime Command and, with the support of our Police and Crime Commissioner, secured over £1.5 million investment to create an enhanced intelligence capability; a function that had been reduced over a number of years during austerity.

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary has continued to achieve significant convictions against organised crime groups and is constantly working to make sure those who bring the most harm to

our communities are pursued and put before the courts. Alongside this, we have also secured successful confiscations, asset seizures and fines. We are committed to tackling the scourge of drugs brought into local communities through County Lines, with a dedicated team responsible for shutting down drugs lines and protecting victims. We have also recently formed a dedicated unit to lead on the force's response to the threat of Modern-Day Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime.

The Chief Constable set clear priorities when he joined in February 2023 to relentlessly pursue criminals, put victims first and provide exceptional local policing and there continues to be a drive behind these to ensure the effective delivery of improvements in key areas such as serious and organised crime. Our officers, staff and volunteers are working extremely hard every day to deliver on these for their communities and we are confident that we are robustly preventing and tackling those who cause serious harm in our communities and we will continue to build our capability to fight serious and organised crime across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Sam De Reya
Deputy Chief Constable, Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Recommendations and cause for concern:

Cause for concern 1: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary needs to make sure it fully understands the threats from serious and organised crime affecting its communities, and share information about serious and organised crime across the workforce.

OPCC response: As PCC I will closely monitor progress by the force seeking updates from my Chief Constable in relation to this cause for concern and the activity being undertaken to fully understand the threats from SOC affecting our HIOW communities, and share information about SOC across the workforce.

Recommendation1: By 1 March 2025, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary should make sure that SOC is recognised as a priority across the workforce and improve how intelligence from SOC investigations is shared with lead responsible officers, frontline teams and partner agencies to create a local response.

OPCC response: I will seek assurances from my Chief Constable that SOC is recognised as a priority across the workforce and improve how intelligence from SOC investigations is shared with lead responsible officers, frontline teams and partner agencies to create a local response by 1 March 2025.

Recommendation 2: By 1 September 2025, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary should make sure that the review of its intelligence function provides enough skilled personnel to collect and process SOC intelligence. This should include adequate analytical support for operational teams, lead responsible officers and senior investigating officers.

OPCC response: I will work with my Chief Constable to ensure that HIOWC provides enough skilled personnel to collect and process SOC intelligence across the force area.