



## **Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel**

**24<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

### **Operation Scorpion – Regional Drugs Policing**

Tackling drugs is one of the four priorities in the Commissioner’s Police and Crime Plan, because drugs can have a devastating social impact on community life and on those who are dependent upon them.

To tackle drugs effectively it is important to address the supply of drugs into our communities. In October 2021 the Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables from the five forces in the South West committed to regional activity to make the region a hostile environment for drug supply. The five forces in the South West that joined this commitment are Devon and Cornwall, Dorset, Avon and Somerset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.

The collective commitment to work together to put a ‘ring of steel’ around the South West to prevent the trafficking and supply of drugs into and across the region is called Operation Scorpion. The appended presentation details the activity associated with Operation Scorpion and the results from the six operational phases to date.

The illegal supply of drugs is a multi-billion-pound international crime business that is felt across the peninsula. Devon and Cornwall, as a largely rural area with many coastal and market towns, is a net importer of Dangerous Drugs Networks using the County Lines model, the majority of which originate in Merseyside, the West Midlands and London. There are typically up to 20 active County Lines in Devon and Cornwall at any one time, not including other classes of Dangerous Drugs Networks. To date, across the five force areas Operation Scorpion has resulted in:

- 627 arrests
- 389 children and adults safeguarded
- Over £7.5 million worth of drugs seized

Operation Scorpion is delivered alongside existing drugs policing in Devon and Cornwall and wider collaborative partnership work to tackle drugs harm. In December 2021 the Government published “From harm to hope: A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives”. This strategy required the establishment of local dedicated Combating Drugs Partnerships to bring together action and oversight. Across the peninsula we have four Combating Drugs Partnerships led by the four upper-tier local authorities. Alongside this the Commissioner has established a peninsular-wide drugs reference group in order to facilitate a shared partnership space to collaborate on the policing and criminal justice aspects of tackling drugs across the two counties.



The Commissioner's Strategic Intentions Plan for tackling drugs can be found [here](#).

A wider update on the Commissioner's activity to support delivery of the Police and Crime Plan Priority to tackle drugs was [shared with the Police and Crime Panel in September 2023](#).

**Contact for further information:**

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