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*Altogether Better Policing*

# Restorative Approaches and Organised Crime Groups

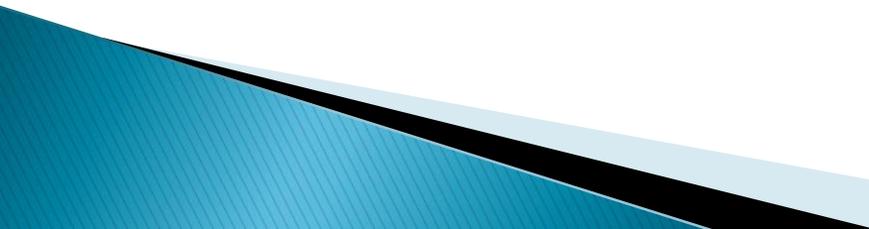
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7 July 2016

# Research Overview

- ▶ N8 Police Research Partnership
  - People Exchange Strand
- ▶ Exploratory study examining applicability of RA to OCGs
  - ‘Opening the door’ to this area of research.
- ▶ Advisory panel compiled of OC and RA experts.
- ▶ February 2016 – July 2016
  - Fieldwork carried out between March and June

# Research Questions

1. What are OCG members' views of taking part in restorative approaches?
  2. What are the views of victims of OCG activities in relation to taking part in different forms of restorative practices?
  3. Which types of OCGs (e.g. acquisitive crime vs violent crimes) lend themselves to restorative approaches?
  4. Which forms of restorative approaches would work best with which types of OCGs (e.g. letters of apologies, face-to-face conferencing, virtual victims, shuttle mediation etc.)
  5. Do any themes emerge about what may be best practice (do's and don'ts type of approach) from this study?
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# Methodology

- Literature review – very little available relevant literature!
- Interviews with 16 OCG participants
  - 8 principals; 6 significant; 2 peripherals
  - Offences include drug dealing, economic crime, human trafficking/CSE, environmental crime and high value commercial/dwelling thefts
- Interviews with 13 victims of OCG activities
  - Victims of organised domestic burglaries, theft of sheep, assault, one corporate victim and one proxy victim
- Consultation with 13 expert RA practitioners/experts
  - Drawn from police, YOS, probation, PCCs staff, academics, local authorities and not for profit companies
- Two preliminary case studies
- Expert stakeholder consultation event
  - Held in July 2016 and attended by practitioners and expert stakeholders including academics, OCG strategic and tactical leads and Home Office policy representatives.

# Pre-fieldwork preparatory research

Is RA already taking place with OCG nominals?

- 3.76% received RA as a disposal over the last 3 years
  - Of those – no principals; 40% significant; and 40% peripherals; 20% classed as ‘Not Known’)
- Only 1 nominal received RA for an OCG-related activity, but this appears to have been perceived as a one-off offence (organised theft from unlocked shed/farm building)
- For remainder, RA was delivered for non-OCG related crimes

# OCG Nominal Interviews

- ▶ Interviewees show evidence of understanding values and concepts of RA.
- ▶ Nearly all interviewees indicate willingness to take part in RA but several express doubt as to whether RA is applicable to their offending.
- ▶ Reasons given for desire to participate in RA appear genuine and valid.
  - A desire to apologise to victim; reassure victim that they had not been personally targeted; forge pathway towards re-integration into local community; influence future decision-making and
- ▶ Some evidence of empathy with victims of OCG offending but also frequent evidence of minimisation of responsibility and struggles to identify victims or impact on community.

# OCG Nominal Interviews (continued)

- ▶ Minimisation of offending
  - Denial of victim; denial of harm; denial of responsibility; etc.
  - Indirect victims; willing consumers; willing co-offenders; victimless crime; etc.
- ▶ Interviewees failed to identify possibility of 'community' as a victim of OCG offending.
- ▶ Belief that victims had 'nothing to lose' from taking part in RA.
- ▶ Case by case approach may be most suitable going forward

# OCG Victim Interviews



# OCG Victim Interviews (continued)

- Interviewees considerably more reluctant (than offenders) to consider entering into RA process due to culture of OCGs and a belief that it would not be possible to find willing OCG participants
  - Where willing, victim motivation centred around “Why Me?” questions and protection of property/assets
  - Several express scepticism of benefit of RA when dealing with ‘career criminals’ but felt would work with juveniles/low-level offences
  - Concern about fact that other offenders are still living in community/neighbourhood and possible reprisals
- ▶ Case by case approach may be most appropriate

# Expert Practitioner Consultation

- Broad enthusiasm for expansion of RA to new contexts (innovation) but evidence of professional discomfort
- Belief that RA *could* work with OCG nominals in the same ways it works with other types of offenders.
- Use of proxy victims suggested as way of representing ‘community victims’
- Concerns expressed about safety and vulnerability of victims
  - Specifically, danger of re-victimisation highlighted
- Specific, tailored training and sound safeguarding practice emphasized as key to making this work

# Case Studies



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# Strategic and Operational Implications

- Evidence of both offenders and victims showing willingness to participate in RA
  - But – significant preparatory work necessary with both sides
- Development of tailored training essential to prepare practitioners for unique nature of offending and victimhood in context of OCG activities
- How officers inform victims of RA about the detail of the approach may be significant (use of language)
- How police define the IP is significant
- Case by case approach most appropriate at this stage



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