

# News story: National County Lines Coordination Centre to crack down on drug gangs

The UK response to county lines drug crime has been significantly strengthened as the £3.6 million National County Lines Coordination Centre became fully operational today (Friday 21 September).

A new multi-agency 38-strong team of experts from the National Crime Agency (NCA), police forces and regional organised crime units will work together to develop the national intelligence picture of the complexity and scale of the threat, prioritise action against the most serious offenders, and engage with partners across government, including in the health, welfare and education spheres, to tackle the wider issues.

County lines crime relates to the supply of Class A drugs, primarily crack cocaine and heroin, from urban cities to market towns, coastal areas and rural locations by young people, using a branded mobile phone line.

Gangs and criminal networks use extreme violence and intimidation to establish and maintain markets, with practices including forcing vulnerable people from their homes to establish a base to sell drugs.

The county lines model involves modern slavery and exploitation of children alongside drugs supply and violent crime. The most recent national assessment of county lines, compiled by the NCA, suggests that there were more than 1000 lines in operation nationally with links to increasing levels of serious violence.

There are already 200 active county lines investigations underway, but the introduction of the centre will allow police forces to intensify their operations.

Welcoming the launch of the National County Lines Coordination Centre, Minister for Crime, Victoria Atkins said:

Using vulnerable young people to travel across the country to sell drugs is an appalling crime and we are cracking down on the gangs and networks responsible for these deplorable acts.

The National County Lines Coordination Centre will strengthen the law enforcement response to this issue and enable police forces to work together to tackle a crime that crosses regions and demands a multi-agency approach.

We are determined to put an end to the serious violence blighting communities. This measure will address one of the key drivers of these tragic crimes.

NCA Director General (Operations), Steve Rodhouse, said:

The NCA is committed to protecting the public by tackling the serious and organised crime threats which cause the greatest harm to the UK.

County lines is a national problem. Supply gangs are responsible for high levels of violence in addition to the exploitation and abuse of vulnerable adults and children.

Law enforcement collectively has been stepping up its response, working to identify and take effective action in areas of the country with the most significant problems.

In addition to helping the NCA and policing partners to work together more effectively and deliver a more comprehensive response to the county lines threat, the centre will assist the development of a whole-system, multi-agency approach which is vital to ensuring that vulnerable people are identified and safeguarded, understanding factors behind demand for drugs, and recovering proceeds of crime.

The National Police Chiefs' Council lead for gangs, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Duncan Ball, said:

The very nature of county lines offending means that we can only truly tackle it by bringing together all UK police forces, law enforcement agencies and other partners to create a unified national response.

Thanks to the Home Office's support, police forces and the NCA will now have the opportunity to better identify and target those criminal networks who run county lines and, with partners, safeguard vulnerable children and adults who are exploited to facilitate this drug supply.

Through this collaboration, the National Police Chiefs' Council and the NCA will provide national coordination, guidance and support to the frontline officers and staff who are working tirelessly to bring these ruthless gangs to justice.

The National County Lines Coordination Centre is the latest measure in the government's response to the recent rise in serious violence, set out in the £40 million [Serious Violence Strategy](#), which places a new focus on early intervention alongside robust law enforcement.

As part of the strategy's analysis into the rise in violent crime, county lines and the broader drugs market was identified as one of the key drivers. Between 2014 to 2015 and 2016 to 2017, homicides where either the victim or suspect were known to be involved in using or dealing illicit drugs increased from 50% to 57%.

In addition to the National County Lines Coordination Centre, a number of Home Office measures are already in place to tackle county lines. The £13 million [Trusted Relationship Fund](#) helps foster relationships between frontline professionals and young people at risk of exploitation. Local areas facing new gang-related threats can apply for match funding reviews and guidance for frontline professionals on how to identify potential victims.

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## **News story: Treasury launches review into barriers for women in business**

- Alison Rose appointed to examine barriers faced by female entrepreneurs
- The review will identify ways of harnessing this untapped talent
- Only one third of UK entrepreneurs are women

Women looking to start and grow a business may be facing unfair obstacles not experienced by their male counterparts, the Exchequer Secretary said today (21 September), as he launched a review and vowed to break down barriers.

While the UK is one of the best places in the world to grow a business, women are half as likely as men to be involved in starting one. This has led to only one in five small and medium-sized employers being run by women – creating a significant pool of untapped entrepreneurial potential.

Leading businesswoman, Alison Rose, who is now Chief Executive of RBS Commercial and Private Banking, will lead the government review to identify the extent of these barriers and explore what can be done to overcome them.

Robert Jenrick, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, said:

The fact that Britain is home to so many new, innovative businesses is something to be proud of. But the fact that so few of them are started by women is shocking. This is not because of a lack of talent or appetite.

Therefore, it's vital that we identify the barriers that are hampering entrepreneurial women from securing the backing that businessmen have taken for granted.

Alison's vast experience in investment banking will be invaluable to helping us level the playing field and empower even more talent in our economy.

Alison Rose, CEO Commercial and Private Banking, said:

If we want to strengthen the UK's position as one of the best places in the world to start and grow a business, then no-one can be left behind.

Unfortunately, statistics show that women make up only a third of all entrepreneurs in the UK – to better drive the UK's economy, we need to understand, and tackle, the barriers and reasons as to why this is – more can be done to support women in enterprise.

I am looking forward to working with the Treasury on this important initiative.

Kelly Tolhurst, Small Business Minister, said:

Entrepreneurs and small businesses are the backbone of our economy and central to our modern Industrial Strategy. As a former small business owner myself I recognize many of the issues faced by female entrepreneurs up and down the country.

This review will bolster our work to make it easier for them to access the support they need to get their ideas off the ground and grow their businesses.

The review will look at ways to help women start and grow a business by considering:

- the drivers of the disparity in male and female entrepreneurship
- actions that could reduce barriers to female engagement in entrepreneurship
- any disparities between female-led and male-led firms seeking and receiving external finance, and what drives this
- examples of best-practice that investors and financial services firms seeking to avoid gender-bias in their investment decisions could adopt

The announcement forms part of the government's work to increase diversity and build a Britain in which small businesses continue to thrive.

The government will consider and respond to the findings of the review when it is published in the Spring.

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## **Press release: Commission for Countering Extremism publishes plans for wide-ranging study into extremism**

The independent Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) today (Thursday 20 September) confirms it will launch a public consultation, seek evidence from government and commission research into the Far Right and Islamist extremism as part of plans for a wide-ranging study into all forms of extremism.

The study, due to be released in spring 2019, aims to improve understanding of extremism and its deep impact on individuals, communities and wider society.

It is the latest milestone in the CCE's mission to helping everyone do more to challenge extremism.

The terms of reference document, published today, explains that the study will be based on 5 themes:

- public's understanding of extremism
- the scale of extremism
- extremist objectives and tactics
- harms caused by extremism
- the current response to extremism

Alongside these 5 themes are two broader issues: the drivers of extremism and how extremism online interacts with the offline world. Under these themes are a series of 10 critical questions.

To answer the 10 questions the CCE confirms in the terms of reference that it will:

- launch a public consultation later in the year and continue to visit towns and cities across the country
- request evidence from government and regulators
- commission new research – including into the Far Right and Islamist extremism and a nationally representative survey
- seek testimony from victims of extremism and those countering extremism

The CCE has already visited a dozen towns and cities across England and Wales, met more than 300 experts and activists and held workshops with civil society groups, human rights and free speech defenders, academics and

practioners. The document includes a breakdown of the lead commissioner's engagement.

Communities have shared their concerns about extremism in person, and through a YouGov poll, which found: 73% of people were worried about "rising levels of extremism in the UK" and 78% felt more needed to be done.

However, the document highlights the challenges faced by those challenging extremism.

It sets out some of the numerous definitions of extremism in use across public bodies and academia.

The document explains that the study will start to address the debate by asking the public what they understand by extremism. It will then identify consistent themes and areas of contention before looking to propose a consensus over the boundaries of extremist attitudes and behaviour.

Lead Commissioner Sara Khan also hopes the work will shine a light on the harms of extremism; whether to individuals, to our society or to our wider democracy. In the terms of reference document, the commission outlines some examples including:

- the role of extremist propaganda in acts of terror
- individuals from faith communities who are targeted and intimidated by religious extremists
- communities feeling the effects of anti-minority hate crime.
- local councils sharing how extremists' demonstrations lead to economic harm
- academics raising harms including social exclusion, isolation and a reduction in trust in institutions such as police and councils

Sara Khan, Lead Commission for countering Extremism, said:

Whether in England and Wales or across the world, there are worrying signs of the growing impact of extremism.

But a lack of understanding about extremism, and its harms, and an absence of consensus is holding back efforts to counter extremism.

Extremism is widely discussed but remains a misunderstood and contested issue. It is often raised in the context of violence and terrorism. This is critical, but we cannot ignore the wider impact extremism is having in our society.

We have to analyse extremism through a wider lens. Otherwise we risk missing the deep harm that extremism causes to individuals, communities and our wider society.

I've spoken to experts and activists across the country. I've heard how religious and ideological extremists are intimidating and abusing those who don't conform to their intolerant and dogmatic

worldview. I've heard concerns about the changing face and increasing prominence of both the Far Right and Islamist extremism. I've heard concerns about rising hate crime on our streets, disinformation on social media and the impact of the online space on the reach of extremism.

This should concern all those that cherish our rich diversity, our fundamental freedoms and liberal democracy.

Our mission is to help everyone do more to challenge extremism.

The first step is building understanding and consensus. That is why my commission will publish a wide-ranging study on all forms of extremism in Spring 2019. These terms of reference are our road map to producing that study.

My approach to this study will be the same approach I have taken throughout my career: a robust defence of pluralism and human rights, gender equality, and our fundamental freedoms including freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief.

Our study is the first stop on an important journey to build understanding of extremism in our country, and encourage everyone – families, civil society, schools, government, statutory agencies, private companies and the public as a whole – to do more to challenge extremism.

The CCE, which is headed up by Sara Khan, was launched as an independent body in March, and kicked off its evidence drive in the summer.

These TOR is the first milestone in the work. Later in the year the commission will launch a public consultation, before publishing its wide-ranging study in Spring 2019.

The 10 questions in the study are:

1) What do people understand by 'extremism' and 'extremist'?

- To what extent is there a shared public understanding of what extremism is?
- What agreement is there on the boundaries of extremism?

2) What do the following indicators tell us about the scale of extremism?

- extremism-related criminal offending e.g. hate crime
- extremist events
- segregation in local areas
- incidents in regulated spaces, e.g. schools, universities, charities
- size and influence of extremist groups
- extremist propaganda on social media and traditional media
- link between extremism and terrorism

- attitudes indicating sympathy to extremist ideas or behaviour

3) What are the objectives of different extremist ideologies?

4) What evolving tactics do extremists and their leaders use to achieve their objectives, including:

- to mainstream their views?
- to recruit people to their cause?
- to respond to those opposing them?

5) What are the harms caused by extremist incidents (such as those mentioned in question 2)?

6) What are the harms of extremism to women, young people, minorities and people countering extremism?

7) What are the wider harms and impact on our democracy and its institutions?

8) What is the government and civil society's current response to extremism, how effective is it and what are the gaps?

9) How can we better support those countering extremism?

10) What could a positive, inclusive vision for our country look like?

## **Extremism and terrorism**

The TOR recognise that there are areas of overlap between extremism and terrorism, such as where extremist propaganda influences terrorism. This is also the case for extremism and integration. The document confirms the CCE will seek to better understand these grey areas.

The CCE's remit covers the government's Counter Extremism Strategy, not the government's Counter Terrorism Strategy (including Prevent) or integration policy. The CCE is not reviewing Prevent. But the document recognises there is an opportunity to learn lessons relevant to extremism from the literature and evidence on integration and counter terrorism programmes.

## **Polling**

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1486 in England and Wales from an overall sample of 1638 GB Adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 20th – 21st June 2018. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all GB adults (aged 18+).

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# **News story: Collision between a freight train and a utility vehicle in Dollands Moor yard**

At about 03:39 hrs on Tuesday 4 September 2018, a freight train travelling towards the Channel Tunnel struck a utility vehicle on a level crossing at the west end of Dollands Moor yard near Folkestone. The train was due to stop in the yard for an inspection and to change locomotive before entering the tunnel.

The train was travelling at 22 mph (35 km/h) and braking, when it struck the stationary utility vehicle. This was driven by a shunter who had been sent to undertake a routine check of the incoming train. The shunter jumped or was thrown from the vehicle and was seriously injured. The train came to a halt after travelling about 100 metres, and petrol from the utility vehicle ignited causing a fire. The train driver had already left the train and was not injured, but the locomotive cab was extensively damaged.

Our investigation will seek to identify the sequence of events which led to the accident and will consider:

- the actions of those involved
- factors affecting the shunter's awareness of his location and his view of the approaching train
- the visibility of the utility vehicle to the approaching train driver
- the method of working within Dollands Moor yard
- any underlying management factors

Our investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry, the [Office of Rail and Road](#), or the British Transport Police.

We will publish our findings, including any safety recommendations, at the conclusion of our investigation; these will be available on our RAIB website.

You can [subscribe](#) to automated emails notifying you when we publish our reports.

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## **Press release: Extended disqualification for engineering boss**

## who breached existing ban

In January 2016 David Stuart, of Aberdeen, received a six-year ban following the liquidation of Nabscaff Limited (Nabscaff) of which he was the sole director. He was disqualified for failing to maintain company books and records.

Following Nabscaff's liquidation, however, David Stuart started a new company in September 2013. Tern Engineering Services Limited (TES) provided engineering services to the oil and gas industry and the court heard that between January 2016 and September 2016, David Stuart continued to act as director of the company despite knowing his ban prevented him from doing so.

Following TES's being wound-up in September 2016, an Insolvency Service investigation found, and in extending his disqualification, the court accepted, that:

- Following TES's liquidation, David Stuart allowed liabilities to accrue to HMRC while making unreasonable payments to himself and gambling accounts when he was already disqualified and the company was significantly insolvent and under creditor pressure
- The company received an income of at least £9,999 per month in the 6 months up to December 2015 but in January and February 2016 after David Stuart's initial disqualification order, only £1,250 was received
- During March and April 2016, receipts totalling £34,770 were received into the company bank account, of which £6,000 was withdrawn by David Stuart, £9,300 was paid to gambling accounts owned by him and payments to unknown payees totalling £17,010 were made but no payments were made to HMRC
- By January 2016, HMRC were owed £57,587 accruing since at least June 2015. HMRC were also the sole creditor in respect of the previous company (Nabscaff), in the sum of £115,472, to which the previous disqualification order related.

David Stuart was aware of his existing disqualification even though he did not attend court for the disqualification proceedings and at a court hearing in Aberdeen Sheriff Court on 2 August 2018, the sheriff granted a disqualification order against Stuart, for 11 years. Again, he did not attend.

Stuart's ban, effective from 23 August 2018, means he cannot be involved directly or indirectly in the promotion, formation or management of a company without the permission of the court.

Commenting, Robert Clarke, Head of Insolvent Investigations North at the Insolvency Service said:

Mr Stuart has paid scant regard to the previous finding that he was unfit to run a company and not only breached that ban but continued

to put his own personal financial interests above those of and the company's creditors.

This sort of behaviour damages confidence in doing business and is corrosive to the health of the local economy.

Mr David Stuart is of Aberdeen and his date of birth is September 1958.

Tern Engineering Services Limited (Company Reg no.SC456295).

The order was pronounced by Sheriff Napier in Aberdeen Sheriff Court.

Andrew Smith appeared for the Insolvency Service and no one appeared for or on behalf of the defendant.

A disqualification order has the effect that without specific permission of a court, a person with a disqualification cannot:

- act as a director of a company
- take part, directly or indirectly, in the promotion, formation or management of a company or limited liability partnership
- be a receiver of a company's property

Persons subject to a disqualification order are bound by a [range of other restrictions](#).

The Insolvency Service administers the insolvency regime, investigating all compulsory liquidations and individual insolvencies (bankruptcies) through the Official Receiver to establish why they became insolvent. It may also use powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK. In addition, the agency deals with disqualification of directors in corporate failures, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice.

Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 7674 6910 or 020 7596 6187

You can also follow the Insolvency Service on:

"The length of this ban should serve as a warning to other directors; you cannot ignore a court imposed sanction and breach the fundamental duty to a company's creditors without facing investigation by the Insolvency Service and removal from the corporate business environment."