



# **THE NORTHERN IRELAND ORGANISED CRIME STRATEGY**

**January 2012 – March 2014**

## **FOREWORD**

The impact of organised crime on our society cannot be underestimated. It impacts on households, government, businesses and communities right across Northern Ireland.

Organised criminals will stop at nothing to make money on the back of our community and have no consideration for who they may harm on the way. The fight against organised crime, in its various forms, therefore remains a top priority.

The Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) will continue to build on the positive contribution it has made to date, but we are intent on refocusing our efforts to help secure a safe, just and prosperous society by confronting organised criminality.

With that in mind, I am publishing a Northern Ireland Organised Crime Strategy 2012-2014. The three main objectives are:-

- to tackle organised crime and put the perpetrators not only out of business but, where possible, before the courts;
- to highlight the successes of the OCTF, so that its work is known and supported, and
- to help the various communities in Northern Ireland that have been affected by organised criminal activity.

The OCTF partners, which include law enforcement agencies and statutory and non-statutory bodies, are committed to working together to focus our efforts towards the implementation of this Strategy. The partnership that exists is central to the success of the OCTF and much has already been achieved.



I want to thank each of the members for their continued commitment to the OCTF and to this Strategy.

However, one of the most important partners throughout the implementation of this Strategy will continue to be the people of Northern Ireland. Law enforcement agencies cannot tackle this issue on their own. They need public support. I want this Strategy to empower local communities to identify and report suspicions and incidences of organised crime and to reduce their support for it so that we can collectively reduce the detrimental impact of organised crime on our society.

**David Ford, MLA**

Minister of Justice

## INTRODUCTION

Organised crime is a sophisticated and specialist form of criminality. An Organised Crime Gang consists of individuals, normally working with others, with the capacity and capability to commit serious crime<sup>1</sup> on a continuing basis. Organised crime has a global reach and causes significant harm to individuals, communities, society and the State.

2. The Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF)<sup>2</sup> was established in Northern Ireland in 2000 to help combat organised crime. It seeks to support law abiding citizens and enable legitimate business community to flourish by identifying and mitigating the effects of organised crime. The OCTF is a voluntary, multi-agency partnership which is unique within the United Kingdom and Ireland. OCTF partner organisations are listed at Appendix A. The structure of the OCTF is at Appendix B.

The Mission of the OCTF is:-

*“To help secure a safe, just and prosperous society in Northern Ireland by confronting organised crime through a multi-agency partnership between central government, the Northern Ireland Government and departments, law enforcement, the Public Prosecution Service, the Northern Ireland Policing Board, the business community and the community at large”.*

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<sup>1</sup> A “serious crime” is a crime which causes or has the potential to cause significant harm. In order to assist the interpretation of this, the following threshold should be applied: Under the Serious Crime Act 2007. (A person has been involved in serious crime in Northern Ireland if he has committed a serious offence or has facilitated the commission by another person of a serious offence in Northern Ireland or had conducted himself in a way that is likely to facilitate the commission by himself or another person of a serious offence in Northern Ireland (whether or not such offences were committed). A serious crime is defined to include a wide range of criminal conduct including Drug Trafficking, People Trafficking, Arms Trafficking, Prostitution and Child Sex, Armed Robbery, Money Laundering, Fraud, Offences in relation to public revenue, Corruption and bribery, Counterfeiting, Blackmail, Intellectual Property, Environment and inchoate offences)

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A

3. The OCTF produces an annual threat assessment which reports on the impact of organised crime. The most recent threat assessment dated June 2011 identified the key threats in 2011/12 to be:-
  - Internet Crime
  - Fraud
  - Money laundering
  - Excise and tax fraud (including Oils Fraud)
  - Intellectual property crime
  - Armed robbery and cash in transit attacks
  - Tiger Kidnaps
  - Drugs
  - Counterfeit currency
  - Organised immigration crime, including human trafficking<sup>3</sup>
  
4. The production of this Northern Ireland Organised Crime Strategy (NIOCS) is intended to bring focus to the collective work of the OCTF and to set a framework within which all partner agencies agree to operate together. The Strategy considers how the major threats are to be identified and mitigated and has been organised under the headings of Awareness, Analysis and Action.

## **NORTHERN IRELAND CONTEXT**

5. Organised crime in Northern Ireland is affected by many external factors which must be considered. The border with the Republic of Ireland is the only external land border in the United Kingdom. It is used by organised criminals to facilitate crime including the illegal movement of goods (such as drugs) between North and South, excise fraud (the evasion of duty on fuel oils, tobacco and alcohol), money laundering and cross border immigration crime including human trafficking and the facilitation of sham marriages.

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<sup>3</sup> The OCTF has also identified environmental crime as an increasing threat.

6. Terrorism in Northern Ireland is funded in part by organised crime. The final report by the Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC)<sup>4</sup> concluded that members of paramilitary groups or individuals with links to paramilitary groups continue to be involved in a wide range of serious and organised criminal activity and that they launder the proceeds of their crime to support other activities.

### **NATIONAL CONTEXT**

7. The Northern Ireland Strategy takes account of the United Kingdom Organised Crime Strategy but it also addresses the specific local priorities agreed by the OCTF which reflect the landscape of organised crime in Northern Ireland.

### **INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT**

8. Organised crime is becoming more sophisticated, innovative and global in nature. Crime gangs operating in Northern Ireland may be predominantly indigenous but the presence of foreign crime gangs is increasingly evident. For example, the trade in illegal drugs and human trafficking will often involve crime gangs from outside this jurisdiction working with locally based criminals or with criminals from their own communities who are based here. The internet also presents new, and in some cases highly complex, opportunities to commit crimes in Northern Ireland from anywhere in the world - sometimes from jurisdictions which do not recognise e-crime in their legal framework.
9. The Strategy acknowledges the cross-border dimension to organised crime and the importance of cross border cooperation. It is vital that OCTF partners

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<sup>4</sup> 25<sup>th</sup> Report of the Independent Monitoring Commission published on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

maintain links with partner agencies in other jurisdictions including An Garda Síochaná, The Revenue Commissioners, the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of the Director of Public Prosecutions in the Republic of Ireland as well as with national and international agencies like Interpol and Europol through their overseas liaison networks.

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

10. The NIOCS contains a number of objectives which will be reported on in the OCTF Annual Report and Threat Assessment published in June each year. Combating organised crime is not the responsibility of one agency working alone. A successful outcome will require an agreed approach by all agencies working together and with the wider community to prevent and to tackle such crime. The partnership approach that is required is delivered in Northern Ireland by the OCTF. The OCTF has agreed that the NIOCS should focus on three overarching objectives and three core strands of work, which together reflect the totality of what is required to disrupt the activities of organised crime gangs and to reduce the harm that they cause.

The three overarching objectives of the NIOCS are to:

- make Northern Ireland a hostile environment for organised criminals.
- inform the public of organised crime trends and to report on the work of the Organised Crime Task Force.
- support Northern Ireland communities<sup>5</sup> affected by organised crime.

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<sup>5</sup> Northern Ireland communities include for example, the business community, education community, the voluntary sector and, geographical areas affected by organised crime.

The three strands are:

- **Awareness** - to raise awareness of organised crime within Northern Ireland in terms of its impact and how the public can help agencies to combat and prevent it. To demonstrate success against organised crime thereby providing assurance to the wider public and all agencies concerned.
- **Analysis** – the proactive research and analysis of the current and emerging threats from organised crime so that the collective resources of OCTF partners and the Northern Ireland community may be targeted appropriately.
- **Action** – raising awareness and developing detailed analysis products will assist law enforcement agencies to take action against crime gangs with a view to frustrating, disrupting and dismantling<sup>6</sup> them, bringing them before the courts, prosecuting them, removing their assets and supporting those affected by organised crime.

11. The impact of this is to focus the combined efforts within the OCTF to combat organised crime in Northern Ireland by:-

- raising public awareness of the effects of organised crime,
- explaining how the public can help and gaining their support to prevent and defeat organised crime,
- working with partners in the United Kingdom, Ireland and internationally,

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<sup>6</sup> Frustrated - the arrest and/or instigation of criminal proceedings against one gang member (not main principal) for an offence which would normally warrant a prison sentence.

Disrupted - the arrest and/or instigation of criminal proceedings against two or more gang members (not main principal) for an offence which would normally warrant a prison sentence.

Dismantled - the arrest and charge/or instigation of criminal proceedings against all the main principals for an offence which would normally warrant a prison sentence.

- identifying and overcoming barriers to successfully tackling organised crime in Northern Ireland,
- gathering information and analysing the problem of organised crime, including the identification of emerging threats, and understanding organised crime in a Northern Ireland context,
- sharing and using analysis to deliver successful operations, facilitating enforcement activity against organised criminals and crime gangs,
- prosecuting those involved in committing organised crime, and
- maximising the recovery of criminally obtained assets.

## **THE THREE STRANDS EXPLAINED:**

### **AWARENESS**

12. Raising awareness amongst the population of Northern Ireland and specific groups within it of organised crime, its impact and how they can help to combat and prevent organised crime is an important element of the OCTF's work. This will include targeting awareness within specific groups including young people, ethnic minorities and the business community, the media and public representatives, to increase their knowledge of the impact of specific crime types, such as, counterfeit goods and human trafficking or environmental damage through fuel laundering. The desired outcome of publicising our success against organised crime is to provide assurance to the public and to other agencies and to act as a deterrent.
13. Law enforcement agencies need the support of others to effectively combat organised crime in all its forms. Communities affected by crime can feel isolated and powerless and the intended outcome of the awareness section of the NIOCS is to inform communities as well as to empower them to protect themselves from the effects of organised crime and to identify and report suspicions and incidences to the appropriate agencies. New communities to

Northern Ireland may also have issues around contacting government agencies in terms of language and cultural differences. The Strategy seeks to positively assist communities affected by crime and to reduce crime by allocating a higher proportion of funds from criminal assets to mitigate the detrimental effects of organised crime in those communities.

## **ANALYSIS**

14. To tackle organised crime effectively, OCTF partners need to have a shared understanding of the nature and effects of the problem. Critical to this is the collection, collation and analysis of information. The NIOCS will promote collective input from all OCTF partner agencies to support the work of an Analyst, funded by the Department of Justice to work specifically on OCTF issues.
15. To be fully effective, analysis should be complete, timely and accurate. Only then can enforcement agencies most effectively prioritise, plan and target their response. Without good analysis the criminal can gain the initiative which can in turn affect public confidence in the wider criminal justice system. Analysis documents completed on behalf of the OCTF will look in detail at organised crime issues in Northern Ireland as a whole and how this compares to other parts of the United Kingdom and Ireland, with particular emphasis on emerging issues and threats.
16. The Strategy also recognises the importance of research to further the understanding of how organised crime operates and to inform a collective response to it.
17. The Strategy recognises that some information may be particularly sensitive and that not all information can be passed on an equal basis to everyone. The key point is that the analytical reports are anonymised as necessary and made available to those who need them in accordance with agreed protocols.

## **ACTION**

18. Raising awareness and developing detailed analysis will assist law enforcement agencies to take action against crime gangs. This section of the NIOCS is concerned primarily with enforcement and prosecution. A key objective is to reduce the impact of, and to prevent, organised crime by proactive intelligence led operations against the activities of the crime gangs involved, putting members before the courts, removing their criminally obtained assets and supporting those affected by organised crime.
19. The NIOCS will build on the existing partnerships that exist within the OCTF to ensure that the combined resources, information and powers of each partner agency are brought together to maximise the impact on organised crime.
20. Law enforcement agencies operate within the existing legal framework. Since the devolution of policing and justice in April 2010, the power to make primary legislation across most of the criminal justice functions now resides with the Northern Ireland Assembly. The NIOCS acknowledges this and the OCTF will seek to update the Northern Ireland legislative framework<sup>7</sup> to facilitate the fight against organised crime. Some relevant legislation is not devolved to Northern Ireland (such as the Misuse of Drugs Act which, inter-alia, classifies prohibited drugs) and some is partially devolved (such as the Proceeds of Crime Act). In these circumstances the DoJ or other partner, as appropriate, will work with Whitehall departments to amend legislation where it has been identified that changes could improve enforcement action against organised crime in Northern Ireland.
21. The intended actions and impacts of the NIOCS are outlined in Appendix C.

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<sup>7</sup> Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, Serious Organised Crime and Police Act 2005, Serious Crime Act 2007, Policing and Crime Act 2009, and the Coroners and Justice Act 2009

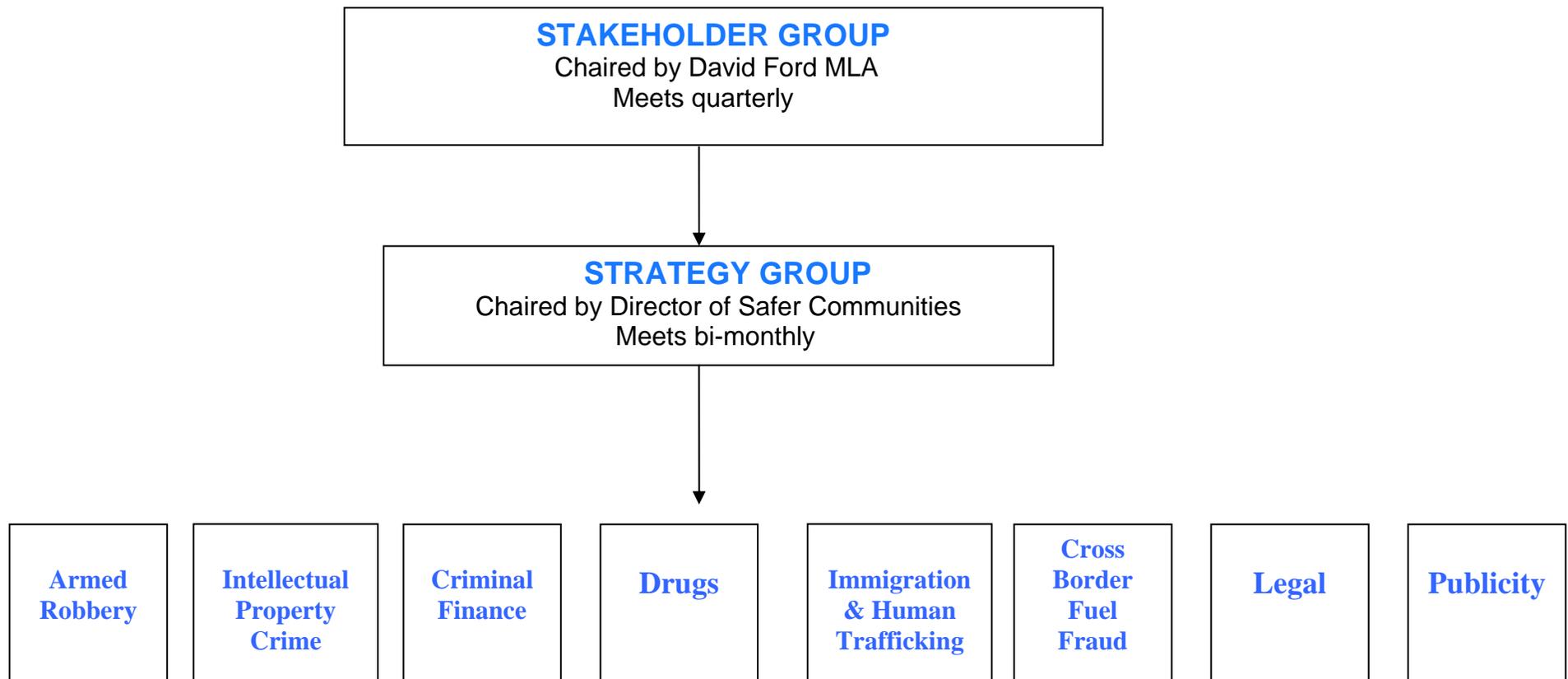
## **OCTF PARTNER ORGANISATIONS**

- Association for UK Interactive Entertainment
- Bank of Ireland
- Brinks
- British Phonographic Industry
- British Security Industry Association
- BSkyB
- Confederation of British Industry
- Courts and Tribunal Services Northern Ireland
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment – Trading Standards
- Department of the Environment (Northern Ireland Environment Agency)
- Department of Finance and Personnel
- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
- Department of Justice
- DIAGEO
- Federation Against Copyright Theft
- First Trust Bank
- Forensic Science Agency Northern Ireland
- Gangmasters Licensing Authority
- Group 4 Security
- Health and Safety Executive
- Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs
- Japan Tobacco International
- Northern Bank
- Northern Ireland Policing Board
- Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce
- Northern Ireland Federation of Small Businesses
- Office of the First and deputy First Minister
- Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Post Office



- Public Prosecution Service Northern Ireland
- RMS Cash Management
- Safer Cash
- Serious Organised Crime Agency (including the UK Human Trafficking Centre)
- Social Security Agency (Northern Ireland)
- UK Border Agency
- Ulster Bank

## STRUCTURE OF THE OCTF



INTENDED ACTIONS AND IMPACT OF THE NIOCS

**Appendix C**

**AWARENESS:** To raise awareness of organised crime within Northern Ireland, its impact, how the public can help agencies to combat and prevent it and to demonstrate success against organised crime thereby providing assurance to the wider public and all agencies concerned.

Activity	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Specific awareness raising events targeted at particular communities or groups.</li> <li>○ Advertising campaigns.</li> <li>○ Publication of OCTF Annual Report and Threat Assessment.</li> <li>○ Reporting OCTF success by press releases or media interviews.</li> <li>○ Publicising confidential and other contact numbers to allow the public to report suspicions.</li> <li>○ Provide advice on crime prevention measures that may be taken to protect the public and business.</li> <li>○ Proactive engagement with the media.</li> <li>○ Articles in journals and magazines.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Increase in public awareness of the issues around organised crime, as measured for example by NI Crime Survey and NI Omnibus survey, and evaluations of specific OCTF campaigns or initiatives.</li> <li>○ Positive change in public attitudes to organised crime as measured by surveys and research.</li> <li>○ Reduction in public tolerance of demand for organised crime products and services.</li> <li>○ Increase in number of hits to OCTF website and social network channels.</li> <li>○ Well informed media and opinion formers.</li> <li>○ More organised crime activity disrupted.</li> <li>○ Community buy-in to the work of the OCTF though increased funding from criminal assets.</li> </ul>

- Greater use of online and social networking opportunities to reach particular communities/groups.
- Greater use of OCTF website and other multimedia formats.
- Production and distribution of OCTF literature/leaflets.
- Promotion of the work of the OCTF by individual partner agencies.
- Quantitative and qualitative research on public awareness of, and attitudes to, organised crime.
- Commission specific research to support attitudinal change.
- Publication of the way in which criminal assets are spent.
- Individual agencies raising awareness of their role within the OCTF, and promoting the work of the OCTF.

- Empowered communities equipped to reject organised crime.
- Support for those affected by organised crime.
- Better targeted awareness and media campaign

**ANALYSIS: The proactive analysis of the current and emerging threats from organised crime so that the collective resources of OCTF partners and the Northern Ireland community may be targeted appropriately.**

Activity	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Production of an annual threat assessment on the impact of organised crime in Northern Ireland.</li> <li>○ Regular analysis of the organised crime gangs operating in Northern Ireland.</li> <li>○ Production of analytical profiles of individual crime types.</li> <li>○ Contribution to the UK-wide Threat Assessment and other UK or international analysis documents.</li> <li>○ In partnership with the Irish Government produce a biennial Cross-Border Threat Assessment.</li> <li>○ Use analysis of OCTF surveys and evaluations to support further targeted awareness raising initiatives and enforcement action.</li> <li>○ Identification and removal of barriers across the justice system that prevent the effective disruption and dismantling of crime gangs.</li> <li>○ Analyse current legislation to ensure it is relevant to current threats.</li> <li>○ Sharing of information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Greater understanding of the impact of organised crime in Northern Ireland.</li> <li>○ Greater understanding of the methods of operation used by organised crime gangs.</li> <li>○ Identification and early response to emerging organised crime trends.</li> <li>○ Effective targeting of available resources to disrupt and deter organised crime gangs.</li> <li>○ More efficient used of joint resources across the OCTF.</li> <li>○ Successful prosecutions and removal of criminally obtained assets.</li> <li>○ An up to date and effective legislative base in place.</li> </ul>

**ACTION: To take action against crime gangs with a view to frustrating, disrupting and dismantling them, bringing them before the courts and removing their assets.**

Activity	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maximise use of intelligence links with UK, Irish and international agencies.</li> <li>○ OCTF partners to contribute to multi-agency intelligence led operations against criminal gangs.</li> <li>○ Joint tasking of operations against organised crime gangs.</li> <li>○ Ensure that agencies can react to unplanned opportunities to disrupt organised crime gangs.</li> <li>○ Work to secure evidence to the level that would lead to successful prosecutions.</li> <li>○ Routinely consider the assets recovery element of any prosecution.</li> <li>○ Maximise the value of criminal assets recovered and promote their effective use by agencies and within communities.</li> <li>○ Where prosecution is not possible, or it is unsuccessful, pursue the option of civil recovery.</li> <li>○ Develop and maintain an effective OCTF Communications strategy.</li> <li>○ Proactively engage with stakeholders to make Northern Ireland a hostile environment for organised criminals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maximise the number of organised crime gangs frustrated, disrupted or dismantled.</li> <li>○ Maximise the number of cases put before the courts</li> <li>○ Improved inter-agency intelligence sharing opportunities.</li> <li>○ The most effective use of available resources across OCTF partners.</li> <li>○ Maximise the value of goods, cash and illegal products seized/ confiscated through joint operations.</li> <li>○ Safer communities in Northern Ireland.</li> </ul>

