

A person in a hoodie stands in a graffiti-covered tunnel, looking towards a bright light at the end. The scene is dimly lit, with the light source creating a strong silhouette and highlighting the textures of the brick floor and the colorful graffiti on the walls.

Velocity

Getting you up to speed with Velocity

Velocity is the countywide name Suffolk Constabulary has given to our operation to tackle drug dealing. This is what the force is doing to tackle the issue.

Connecting the dots with County Lines

'County Lines' and the supply of drugs is effectively a gang of at least three people who have established a drug market in a rural town, with origins to an urban city location. For example for Suffolk, it is likely to be a gang from London with them moving into local towns, predominantly Ipswich, Bury St Edmunds and Lowestoft to transport/sell class A drugs (specifically crack cocaine and heroin). It's a national trend and all forces within the East are aware and are tackling the issue. Mobile phones are frequently used to facilitate the drug deals and these are professional and experienced gangs.

It's a nasty business

Gangs typically use vulnerable young people to deliver drugs to customers and this can include deception, intimidation, violence, and/or grooming. Knives are the most common weapon however bats, hammers and boiling water are also used in county lines operating across the country. The nature of this activity causes disputes with other gang members or local drug dealers for the custom and hence many violent incidents occur because of this.



The vulnerable fall prey

We will always be after the dealers but it's also about supporting people who have become involved in criminal activity through their vulnerabilities and need help to escape the cycle. Vulnerable adults and young people are frequently used and in some cases drug dealers take over the property of a vulnerable person and use it as a place from which to run their drugs business. This is known as 'cuckooing'. The vulnerable could be current drug users, addicts, young people, or people with mental health issues, so tackling the issue with our partner agencies is vital.

The story so far

Three operations in existence across Suffolk are well established and operate to tackle the immediate threat and risks. Operation London (West), Operation Volcanic (South) and Operation Boulevard (East). Operation Volcanic was commissioned in June 2013, Operation London was commissioned in December 2014 and most recently Operation Boulevard in December 2015. These have had great success and enable each policing area to tie in with local partners.

We can't do it alone

Each operation engages with a range of partners at a tactical level including, Housing, Local Authorities, Probation Services, drug support agencies and charities, Youth Offending Service, Children and Young People's Services and Health and Mental Health.

These partnerships help vulnerable individuals who are targeted and offer them support to address their drug dealing habit, or it can involve working with partners to take positive action using anti-social behaviour legislation to close down premises that are being used for drug dealing.

Likewise, Youth Offending and Children and Young People's services offer support to teenagers who may either be offending and / or going missing and are being exploited by drug dealers. This work will continue.



What is the next step?

Velocity provides the opportunity to bring this work together at a countywide level, particularly with partners, so that there is joint impetus on addressing the problem from a long term perspective.

This is about gaining momentum and fresh impetus in tackling drug crime and supporting those who are exploited.

Through the combined energy and drive of police and associated partners the focus will be on the reduction of drug crime/use and protecting the vulnerable and young people through early interventions.

There will be some specific work with partners around tackling youth gang violence and the issues of drug dealing, building on the activity that has taken place under Operation Woven in Ipswich over the last few months, and developing the recommendations of the current multi-agency review that is underway looking at this issue.

Safeguarding has equal priority to enforcement

There is a need through effective partnership working to ensure any person who by virtue of age or any other vulnerability is identified early and dynamic multi-agency intervention takes place in order to protect them. Key partners that need to be involved in this are Education, Mental Health and Children and Young People's Services and local housing providers as there is a new trend for some gang members to settle in local communities.





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How the public can help

Local communities in Suffolk have an important role to play in ensuring the county is a safe place to live and work. Help keep your area safe by telling us what you know about drug activity near you. Residents who are nervous about providing information should be reassured that information is treated seriously and in the strictest of confidence.

We want to ensure the next generation can grow up in a safe county without fear of violence or intimidation. The police and partners won't tolerate it and you shouldn't have to either.