



Scotland Report

NCA Summary October 2023 – March 2024

Statistics and visuals in this report reflect all activity undertaken by the NCA and is assessed to have had an impact in Scotland. In line with NCA Strategy (Upstream, Overseas and Online), not all activity included has been undertaken within Scotland, some will have been assessed as having a broader UK impact, that includes Scotland.

NCA Strategy 2023-2028

1. Degrading the most harmful organised crime groups by:

- going **upstream** to disrupt those at the top of the criminal chain, those who enable their activities, and those who launder the money they make
- taking action **overseas**, tackling the threat at source and en route to the UK
- increasingly focusing on **online** crime to combat a critical enabler of the organised crime business model, reflecting the fact that more crime takes place online or is enabled by technology

2. Leading the UK's operational response by:

- improving how the threat is understood and used to prioritise across the system
- strengthening multi-agency 4P (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare) plans to reduce the harm from each threat
- improving performance measurement across the system
- bolstering the national services and capabilities provided by the Agency to system partners
- strengthening the system response to new and emerging threats

3. Transforming the Agency's capabilities by:

- unlocking the value of data to drive operational effect
- delivering a new approach to capability development
- improving the Agency's situational awareness
- strengthening the foundational capabilities as they relate to data technology and estates

4. Growing a highly skilled workforce by:

- better understanding the skills the Agency needs to transform workforce planning
- creating career pathways that improve officer experience
- becoming a more attractive employer through reformed pay and benefits
- improving the Agency's learning offer to meet future challenges
- establishing a more diverse workforce and inclusive culture
- embedding smarter working into the Agency's ethos

NCA Strategy – Impact for Scotland

Protecting the Public

Our approach as a national agency to protecting the public in Scotland from Serious Organised Crime (SOC), consistent with the Scottish Government's four D approach, is twofold:

1. To take action outside of Scotland, upstream, overseas, and online to best protect the public from SOC before it impacts and harms Scottish communities utilising organisational capabilities. These capabilities such as major investigations, the NCA International Liaison Officer network, its corporate relationship with Social Media companies and industry, or enhanced cyber capabilities, are system capabilities established to support wider UK law enforcement partners.
2. To work in partnership with the Police Service of Scotland (PSoS) and Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Services to take action in Scotland to protect Scottish communities from SOC, pulling through niche NCA capabilities to support frontline use in Scotland.

NCA Scotland

The NCA presence in Scotland consists of officers who are involved in Investigations, Intelligence and Intelligence analysis relating to SOC. The current NCA operating model within Scotland is predicated on the general premise the NCA will support PSoS, where requested, with its niche capabilities. More specifically the NCA collaborates with PSoS within the Organised Crime Partnership (Scotland) (OCP).

More specifically the NCA is collaborating with PSoS within the Organised Crime Partnership (Scotland) (OCP). The OCP is comprised of 15 NCA officers and 15 PSoS officers who are co-located and jointly managed. It is founded on the doctrine that its collaborative activities are tasked, co-ordinated and focused to complement mutually agreed objectives relating to the investigation and disruption of SOC, enabled through the exploitation of high quality confidential intelligence. NCA investigations in Scotland are agreed by Lord Advocate under Schedule 1 of the Crime & Courts Act 2013.

Working Together

We work closely with PSoS to keep in lock step with the strategic changes they are making regarding prioritisation of resources against the SOC threat, providing support from NCA capabilities wherever possible.

NCA impact in Scotland – Disruptions

Measuring Impact

As part of the NCA five year strategy we continue to operate at the high end of high harm of serious and organised crime.

This strategy commits us to focus on activity that will degrade the most harmful organised crime groups. The success of this strategy is principally measured using 'pursue' disruptions that are NCA led, and assessed as having a major or moderate impact on P1/ P2 investigations (a prioritisation framework of four descending levels (1-4)). These are referred in the following data slide (slide 4) as the operational tilt.

Another crucial component of the NCA strategy is how we support the response to serious and organised crime in the devolved administrations and ensure that we work collaboratively, supporting PSoS to tackle the most significant threats facing the public. One way in which this will be measured is through support disruptions, where we provide our capabilities to enhance operations led by partners such as PSoS.

Disruptions Definition

A disruption has been achieved when an agency takes **action** in response to a threat which has an **impact**.

It is a measure of impact, and not a measure of activity or effort and should only be recorded when the agency can clearly articulate the threat, the action taken and the resulting impact.

Disruptions may impact upon an Organised Crime Group (OCG) or individual, resulting in them being unable to operate at their usual level of criminality. A disruption may also relate to a specific threat, resulting in a reduced threat level.

There are two roles agencies can take in a disruption. A **lead disruption** is recorded by the agency achieving the impact and are likely tasked with responding to the OCG, individual or threat. A **support disruption** is recorded by an agency that has provided some form of resource or capability to assist another agency in achieving a lead disruption.

Disruptions Impact Assessment

The impact of each disruption is categorised under one of the below three criteria:

Major Impact – A significant and/or long term disruptive impact on the capability of the OCG, individual or vulnerability.

Moderate Impact – A noticeable and/or medium term disruptive impact on the capability of the OCG, individual or vulnerability.

Minor Impact – A minimal and/or short term disruptive impact on the capability of the OCG, individual or vulnerability.

NCA impact in Scotland– October 2023 to March 2024

Disruptions

In the six month period of October 2023 to March 2024 there were 131 NCA disruptions impacting on Scotland. This consisted of 96 lead and 35 support disruptions.

When considering all NCA disruptions in the last financial year there has been an increase of **29** in comparison to 2022/23. This growth has been seen largely in lead disruptions with an increase of **32** this year.

	2022/23			2023/24			Change
	Lead	Support	Total	Lead	Support	Total	
Major Impact	23	0	23	25	4	29	+6
Moderate Impact	69	27	96	87	24	111	+15
Minor Impact	66	62	128	78	58	136	+8
Total	158	89	247	190	86	276	+29

Disruptions by Threat

The table shows how NCA disruptions impacting on Scotland are distributed across threats impacted.

The totals are those achieved in between **October 2023 and March 2024** based on their level of impact.

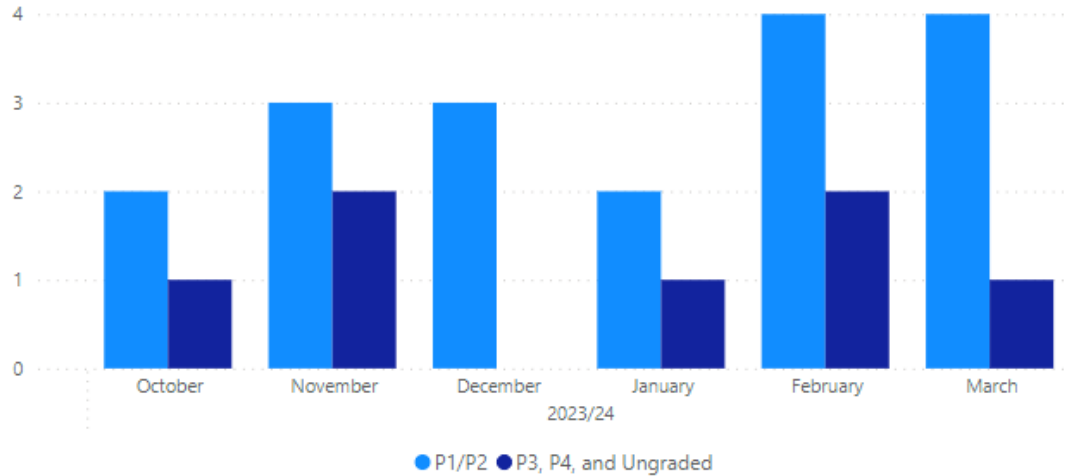
Denoted in brackets is the number of tilt disruptions within overall totals.

Threat	Major Impact	Moderate Impact	Minor Impact	Total Oct 23 – Mar 24
Drugs	5 (2)	13 (6)	10	28 (8)
Firearms	3 (1)	5	2	10 (1)
Organised Acquisitive Crime		1	1	2
Child Sexual Abuse	3 (2)	14	8	24 (2)
Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking		1	8	9
Organised Immigration Crime		2 (2)		4 (2)
Cyber	1	6	4	11
Fraud	1	4 (2)	8	13 (2)
Money Laundering		3 (2)	5	8 (2)
Borders		1		1
Cross Cutting	1	3 (1)	3	7 (1)
No Threat Specified		1	6	7
Non-National Control Strategy	1	1	6	8
Total	15 (5)	55 (13)	61	131 (18)

NCA impact in Scotland – October 2023 to March 2024

Tilt Disruptions

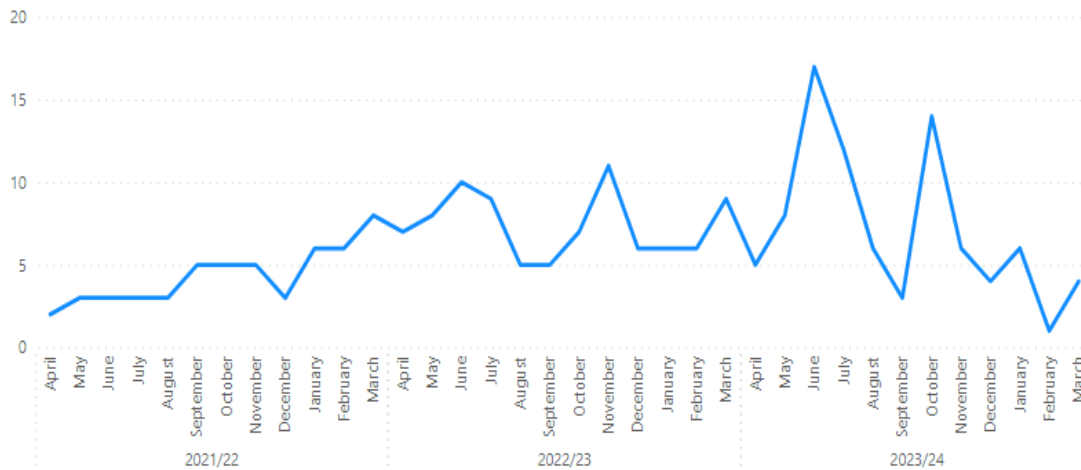
Major/Moderate Lead Pursue Disruptions Impacting Scotland



- The chart identifies the number of NCA lead major or moderate pursue disruptions (by month), delivered by the NCA which had an effect in Scotland. This includes those delivered by OCP Scotland. It separates those which are recorded on a P1 or P2 investigation and therefore 'tilt disruptions'.
- The NCA has delivered a total of **18** tilt disruptions that had an impact in Scotland between October 2023 and March 2024.
- In 2022/23 NCA this figure is 31 tilt disruptions over the year, 20 in the first half and 11 in the second. In 2023/24 NCA achieved 39 overall, 21 in the first half and 18 in the second, indicating an increase in overall tilt disruptions impacting on Scotland.
- Examples of the disruptions delivered by the OCP can be found on page seven with wider NCA activity that will also include the disruptions detailed from page eight onwards.

Support Disruptions

NCA Support Disruptions in Scotland year on year comparison



- In the past 12 months the NCA has continued to collaborate successfully with PSoS with the delivery of **86** support disruptions. This is a reduction of three on 2022/23. **35** support disruptions have been delivered between October 2023 to March 2024
- Examples of these disruptions and further support provided by the NCA can be found from page seven onwards.

NCA working with OCP: Impact & Sentences of note examples

Drugs

In January OCP Scotland held a day of action against a greater Glasgow OCG active in multiple frauds and importation of cannabis. OCP, supported by NCA officers from England and Northern Ireland, designated with Scottish Powers, executed search warrants at five premises. Approximately £40k was seized, believed to be the proceeds of fraud and drugs offences.

At one property a cryptocurrency wallet and recovery key were also seized. Four subjects of interest (SOIs) were located and pertinent devices seized from them. No arrests made as evidence collection ongoing regarding wide spread fraud and drug importation offences.

Drugs

Resulting from an OCP Scotland proactive operation into a Western Balkans High Value Target responsible for multiple cannabis cultivations across greater Glasgow, a subject was found guilty and sentenced to eight years imprisonment. Work has commenced with NCA Immigration Disruption Team to seek a deportation order upon release.

Working in collaboration with international partners and with support of the ILO network a second subject was arrested on a TaCA warrant in Italy. NCA and PSoS are collaborating to facilitate extraditing the suspect.

Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking

In December, the Joint Money Laundering Intelligence Taskforce (JMLIT) Operations Group are providing support to a PSoS investigation into Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking, concerning the laundering of around £500,000 raised from it, by an Eastern European OCG based in Scotland. The OCG is believed to bring vulnerable Romanian women, as young as 18, into the UK and force them to work in brothels they control.

Positive responses from the JMLIT Operations Group have been provided and are currently under review by the case team.

Fraud

As part of a national investigation into large scale fraud targeting elderly and vulnerable victims, linked to OCG members based across Greater Glasgow, over 100 NCA, Police Scotland and SWROCU officers executed 12 POCA search warrants, arrested 7 persons for money laundering and fraud offences and seized approximately £300K as well as numerous high value items and assets.

Money Laundering

Fingerprint evidence identified a Scottish nominal as being linked to a money laundering investigation following a 2023 UK Border Force significant seizure of cash aboard an outbound Lithuanian registered HGV at Felixstowe. In March NCA and PSoS officers executed warrants at an address in Renfrewshire where a suspect was arrested attempting to destroy evidence.

Paperwork appears to indicate significant money laundering activity dating back to 2022. Ledgers were seized and appear to show millions of pounds, assessed as being on behalf of Scottish based OCGs, being laundered.

A quantity of cash (estimated at £60,000) along with communication devices seized.

Firearms

As part of an OCP Investigation into the importation of a Glock pistol and 100 rounds of ammunition, in January OCP officers assisted by PSoS Firearms unit arrested a suspect and conducted a property search.

The suspect pled guilty to offences for firearms and possession of indecent images as well as extreme pornography concerning children and was sentenced to five years imprisonment with an extended four year licence upon release.

NCA wider support to Scotland

Drugs

- PSoS has been fully engaged with the bi-weekly National Senior Investigation Officers Forum and the monthly Project HOUSEBUILDER co-ordination meetings, supporting the NCA-led whole system operational response to the threat from nitazenes/xylazine. Senior Investigation Officers from PSoS have received operational briefings on the threat posed by nitazenes/xylazines and the NCA led response, including the operational requirement and the assistance available to ensure robust and consistent investigations across the UK. Briefings have also been provided on the early warning system developed in collaboration with the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities (OHID). There have been 17 nitazene related deaths reported in Scotland during the period June 2023 – February 2024.
- The NCA's work internationally to disrupt the drugs trade continues. The last period has seen the largest ever drugs seizure in the UK (over five tonnes at Southampton docks and the largest ever on the Atlantic (over 10 tonnes), both enabled by NCA intelligence. A proportion of these drugs would have flowed to the UK including Scotland.

Firearms

- NCA Firearms and Explosives Network has established a strong working relationship with Police Scotland licensing and ScotLab Forensics Gartcosh supporting the potential classification of specific paintball devices. Information has been requested and shared in relation to any cases involving this device and any engagement with the UK wholesaler based in Scotland.
- NCA attended the PSoS 3D Printed Firearms Working Group to discuss how relevant legislation was being applied. In addition, NCA attends the Scottish Criminal Use of Firearms Board, often presenting on the response to the criminal use of top-venting blank-firing firearms and 3D printed firearms. Under Project INTERKNOW, the NCA's operational response to the threat of 3D printed firearms, we have offered support relating to any case in Scotland where required.
- Under Project SERGEANCY, NCA has written to all identified retailers, including some in based in Scotland, of top-venting blank-firing imitation firearms to request details of sales of these items in a given time frame. The National Firearms Targeting Centre will shortly disseminate packages informing PSoS of purchases of these items for consideration and action as deemed appropriate. In November 2023, NCA circulated a firearms alert, including to PSoS, in respect of identified trends in recovered firearms. This alert detailed key characteristics of the type of weapon and provided a reporting mechanism if required.

Child Sexual Abuse

- The CSA Referrals Bureau is the central point within the NCA for receipt of industry referrals relating to online child sexual abuse. This is predominantly via the US National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children who provide a centralised mechanism for public and electronic service providers to report suspected sharing of indecent images of children and other forms of CSA offending. In Q3 & Q4 2023-24, the CSA RB made **707** disseminations to Police Scotland.
- In Q3, Police Scotland reported **42** arrests and **69** children safeguarded across CSA workstreams. Additionally, **80** victims were identified from indecent images of children and notified to the NCA Victim Identification Team.
- During Q3 and Q4 the CEOP Education Team trained two professionals from Scottish organisations on the updated 'CEOP Education Ambassadors' course and five professionals on the new 'Understanding Online Child Sexual Abuse' course. The attendees represented Social Services, Charity Sector, Social Care, Training & Development and Education.

NCA wider support to Scotland

UKFIU

- UKFIU continues to assist Police Scotland by disseminating high-risk Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) and requests for Defence Against Money Laundering (DAMLs) directly. UKFIU also make all other SARs relating to Scotland available to accredited Financial Investigators and Intelligence Officers. Stakeholder engagement has included attending The Law Society of Scotland's annual conference, the UKFIU's Banking SARs Working Group and meeting Natwest's nominated Officer for Scotland.
- During this period, 834 DAMLs out of an overall total of 28,957 were referred to PSoS, resulting in assets of almost £110k being denied and restraints of almost £2k. More than 100 SANS were fast-tracked to PSoS including those relating to vulnerable persons, suspected child exploitation and suspected Human Trafficking. The UKFIU also issued 7 international requests on behalf of PSoS in relation to Drugs, Money Laundering, Human Trafficking, Fraud including Romance and Investment; 12 counter terrorism related SARs were disseminated to PSoS.

Money Laundering

- The National Economic Crime Centre (NECC) coordinated system wide activity, in collaboration with Europol, under Operation EMMA 9 in November. The NECC and City of London Police coordinated allocation of funding to policing partners to enable Pursue-focused activity targeting mules and mule herders. Police Scotland requested and received funding which resulted in eight search warrants being executed, five individuals charged with SOC criminality, two individuals charged with money-laundering and an Account Freezing Order of £200,000 being obtained.
- The NECC's Money Laundering Expert Witness Cadre is supporting Police Scotland in a case involving drug trafficking and money laundering. Advice was provided around evidencing laundering and methodologies, and engagement with the case team is underway to establish requirements for the provision of an expert witness statement.
- As part of **Project ECHIDNA**, the NECC coordinated and delivered multi-agency training for Companies House staff in Edinburgh ahead of the introduction of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act. Over a 2 day period, NECC's High End Money Laundering and Expert Laundering Evidence Teams alongside HMRC, FCA and OPBAS successfully delivered multiple presentations to Companies House staff. The content of presentations included overview of the partner agencies, their use of Companies House data and interactive sessions about criminal techniques involving UK corporations. Overall feedback from Companies House was very positive and the interactive sessions and follow up discussions highlighted as being particularly valuable.

Fraud

- National fraud intensification HENHOUSE III was coordinated by the National Economic Crime Centre (NECC), with activity taking place during February. All UK police forces and Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) were represented, including Police Scotland.
- PSoS and the OCP were invited to bid for funding to deliver the intensification locally. NECC provided funding of £10k to Police Scotland, facilitating the arrest of 4 fraud suspects. The investigation established nominals responsible for a fraudulent courier fraud scheme involving 15 victims, with the total value of the frauds currently over £1.8m. OCP Scotland received £2k, enabling them to make 4 seizures relating to fraud investigations with a total of £41k and over 20 devices being seized. Arrests may follow depending on analysis of device downloads.
- Nationally, HENHOUSE III resulted in 442 arrests. There were also 211 voluntary interviews; 283 cease and desist notices; and £18.9m in assets denied (cash seizures, Account Freezing Orders, restraint).

NCA wider support to Scotland

Cybercrime

- In February, the NCA led and coordinated an international operation that infiltrated and took down Lockbit, the biggest ransomware strain, accounting for over 25% of global attacks, including on 14 organisations in Scotland.
- The NCA National Cyber Crime Unit (NCCU) has a dedicated support team offering continuous operational assistance on cybercrime incidents of note impacting the jurisdiction of Scotland and or investigations being conducted by Police Service of Scotland (PSoS). Ad-hoc support is also provided to cyber incidents where necessary, as well as supporting national and international co-ordination.
- NCCU disseminated real time intelligence to PSoS and NHS Scotland, alerting them to an advanced stage cyber-attack against Dumfries and Galloway Trust that they had not been aware of. Further specialist NCA support included intelligence research, international requests and liaising with the UK's National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) on mitigations.
- Other NCCU support included a PSoS investigation into 'Myra.sh' Distributed Denial of Service platform (DDOS) with NCA specialist teams identifying victims and criminal users of the service, disseminating information regarding a Quinlan Ransomware attack against Western Isles Council, intelligence support to research identifiers targeting PSoS infrastructure and via NCA's cryptocurrency expertise provision of information on the purchase of a firearm on the Dark Web linked to Counter Terrorism activity.
- In early March, the NCA hosted the Cyber Operational Workgroup (COW) in Edinburgh. The event included over 80 delegates with a cyber interest from stakeholders from across UK law enforcement, UK Government (UKG) and international partners.
- NCA has assisted PSoS to prepare a SyOps plan relating to the corporate use of a newly acquired social media research tool, ensuring compliance with DPIA and supported PSoS in creating bespoke guidance to SIOs dealing with cyber incidents.

Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking

- The NCA's Joint Intelligence Cell with Near Europe Partners (JICURO) supported a PSoS investigation into human trafficking and sexual exploitation of Romanian victims by a Romanian OCG in Scotland.
- Following a request, JICURO deployed to the Port of Calais where the subjects of interest had travelled to from Glasgow en-route to Romania
- Police Scotland participated in AIDANT intensification in March, focused on labour exploitation within the adult social care sector. Results are not yet available.
- The MSHT & OIC Illicit Finance Team delivered a 'Lunch & Learn' event to the JMLIT Sexual Exploitation Cell of which PSoS is a member, aiming to upskill partners, and improve detections and investigations of MSHT. It included briefings from two investigations and from an NGO on their work supporting victims from their initial encounter and throughout the safeguarding process.

Borders

- Early engagement with PSoS is underway on a NCA Borders Threat Leadership led project concerning concealments. This is currently focussed around a CPD event for PSoS staff.
- From October 2023 to March 2024 there were 26 referrals relating to detections at the Scottish ports or airports. Of these, 18 referrals met the criteria for adoption by the NCA. 15 related to class B seizures and three to a class A seizure. Air passenger detections were most prevalent, accounting for 16 of the total with the remaining two fast parcel and postal detections.

NCA wider support to Scotland

JICC

- The NCA international liaison officers (ILOs) continue to support PSoS. There has been significant support from NCA ILOs in Europe in particular Spain and France in relation to fugitives. Operational and intelligence research has been carried out to trace, locate and corroborate intelligence in these regions. All intelligence gathered through activity has been shared with officers in Scotland.
- One successful example includes ILO Athens being contacted in February by PSoS Fugitive Active Search Team. Operational intelligence, facilitated by ILO Dubai, was received indicating that a fugitive involved in a PSoS large scale money laundering investigation had recently boarded a flight to Athens from Dubai and would be landing imminently. A TaCA warrant/Interpol Red Diffusion was previously issued to EU and EEA countries as the subject was believed to be in Spain. ILO Athens and NCB Manchester engaged with NCB Athens successfully negotiating an immediate enforcement action plan for the subject's arrival. The fugitive was detained on arrival and held for extradition.
- During the period October 2023 – February 2024, PSoS have made 16 arrests and had 19 surrenders under Extradition Part 1 and have received 15, made 12 arrests and had 10 surrenders under Extradition Part 3.

MCIS

- Between 01/10/23 - 31/03/24 the NCA's Major Crime Investigative Support (MCIS) provided advice and support to Police Scotland on 39 cases, and deployed officers on 46 occasions. Cases included murder, rape, suspicious/unexplained deaths and missing persons.
- Counter Terrorism investigation Operation Ferulic relates to a PSoS led investigation which involves the apparent preparation for a firearms attack in the Edinburgh area. Over several meetings MCIS deployed several specialists including National SIO Adviser, Crime Investigation Support Officer, Forensic Clinical Psychologists, Behavioural Investigative Advisers and Interview Advisers and supported the investigation and Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service in relation to assessing and managing risk, interview preparation and wider investigative suggestions and options.

UKPPS

- The NCA Central Services Unit provides, as a part of the UK Protected Persons Service (UKPPS), operational support to the Police Scotland Protected Persons Unit which is aligned to the UKPPS. In Q3, UKPPS provided 21 new instances of support to Police Scotland, and 6 days of training to 42 officers. In Q4 there were 17 new instances of support to Police Scotland, and 15 days of training to 2 officers.

UKNCO

- The UK National Central Office (UKNCO) for Counterfeit Currency continue to provide support for a number of PSoS counterfeit currency seizures. During Q3 and Q4, 52 requests have been processed and analysed, with 19 expert witness statements relating to Both bank of England and Scotland notes provided to support police prosecutions/investigations. A number of these cases involving the Scottish notes were linked to suspects from England travelling to Scotland in furtherance of passing the counterfeit notes.
- The only sterling (GBP) banks notes in circulation are now polymer in respect of all UK issuing banks. A number of banks no longer issue £50 notes. Ulster Bank, Bank of Scotland and Royal Bank of Scotland are the only banks issuing polymer £50 notes. Retailers are now advised not to accept paper notes and to refer customers to banks to deposit / exchange their paper notes. This will reduce the threat to retailers and the public from counterfeits of the older paper design notes.