



South West forces work together to reduce harm caused by drugs



The latest week of intensification as part of the Operation Scorpion initiative involved a range of enforcement action carried out across the region, as well as education and prevention work taking place.

Avon & Somerset Police, Devon & Cornwall Police, Dorset Police, Gloucestershire Constabulary and Wiltshire Police teamed up with the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit (SWROCU) and British Transport Police to harness their collective capabilities in disrupting the supply of illegal drugs in the region. The operation also coincided with the national County Lines Intensification Week (CLIW).

In total across the region:

- 106 people were arrested

- 65.7kg of cocaine was seized, plus 274g of crack cocaine, 13.9kg of cannabis and 455grams of heroin
- £119,326 in cash was seized
- 38 people were safeguarded
- 29 suspected county lines were shut down
- 17 vehicles were seized, including six e-bikes
- 100 mobile phones were seized
- 26 weapons were seized

Operations across Devon and Cornwall contributed the following results to the regional crackdown totals:

- 41 arrests
- £57,466 cash seized
- 85g crack, 194.4g heroin, 64kg cocaine, 11.6kg cannabis resin, 0.5kg ketamine seized
- 15 people safeguarded
- 3 weapons seized including hunting knives. Also 8 firearms including stun gun and pepper spray
- 4 county lines shut down
- 3 vehicles and 19 mobile phones seized

Deputy Chief Constable for Devon & Cornwall Police Jim Colwell said: “Our goals during Operation Scorpion 12 were to protect young and vulnerable people from the dual harms of illegal drugs activity. Illegal drugs can do great physical and psychological harm, and the criminal gangs associated with their supply have no qualms about who they exploit, coerce, threaten and harm to enable their activities.”

DCC Colwell continued: “Devon & Cornwall Police has had a very successful Operation Scorpion and crackdown on county lines, and I’d like to thank all of our officers and staff, and our partners British Transport Police and the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit, for their huge efforts last week. They will continue this work day in, day out, all year round, in order to make the south west no place for drugs and to safeguard people from the effects of drug related crime.

Alison Hernandez, Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly said: “Operation Scorpion demonstrates very clearly the unstinting enforcement work that goes on to close down county lines and to disrupt other drug related crime. This helps us to protect those who are being exploited and to relieve the misery that people tell me they are suffering due to drug dealing and drug abuse.

“I’d also like to thank the public who have come forward with information which is invaluable to helping the police focus their resources where needed. We particularly urge the public to let us know if they spot the signs that a young person might be exploited, perhaps into carrying drugs. Please look closer and if you have intelligence around suspected drug activity in your community, or you think someone is being exploited, please report it anonymously via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or online.”

Research shows that across the region more local children and vulnerable people in our communities are being exploited to supply and store drugs.

During this latest operation, forces had a focus around those who exploit children, enable drug dealers to operate in our communities or look the other way.

As part of their efforts to educate and inform key industries that may be unknowingly enabling drug supply networks to conduct their operations and exploit vulnerable people, officers also worked with hotels, taxi and private hire companies and postal operators to

raise awareness of the signs of exploitation and encourage them to report any concerns.

Work was also carried out with young people and schools to educate them around the risks associated with illegal vapes. Not only do they pose serious health risks, it is believed criminals are recruiting young people to sell these illegal products, opening them up to potential further exploitation.

Regional Assistant Chief Constable Andy Hill, of the South West ROCU, said: “The number of arrests, together with the drugs and weapons seized, shows the determination across the region to target and disrupt the organised crime groups looking to profit from the exploitation of young and vulnerable people.

“But just as crucial is the huge joint effort that’s been put into preventing them from being exploited in the first place, both through education of businesses and engagement with young people and professionals.

“It’s a stark reality that the average age of someone controlling a drugs line is 21, and the average age of a drug runner is just 15 to 17. Effectively tackling this is about everyone recognising the need to Look Closer to spot the signs of a young or vulnerable person being exploited and speaking up for them.”

To find out more about the signs of child exploitation through The Children’s Society’s Look Closer campaign visit [#LookCloser To Spot Exploitation | The Children's Society](#)

If you suspect illegal drug activity is happening where you live, please report to the police.

Call 101 or report online at [Home | Devon & Cornwall Police](#). If anyone is in immediate danger call 999.

If you wish to remain completely anonymous you can use Crimestoppers, an independent charity, by reporting online at [crimestoppers-uk.org](#) or by calling 0800 555 111.