

# Showing criminals that the South West is #NoPlaceForDrugs

Earlier this month, we worked with our colleagues across the South West to tackle cross border drugs supply activities.

'Operation Scorpion' involved Avon and Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Police, working collectively with Police and Crime Commissioners, British Transport Police and the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit. It was supported by the charity Crimestoppers.

Setting aside regional boundaries, just as criminals engaging in drugs activity do, we harnessed our collective power and a range of tactics to disrupt the South West drugs market, dismantling drugs supply networks and arresting those who profit from them.

You can see footage of our activity here: [https://youtu.be/N36kOPg\\_PXo](https://youtu.be/N36kOPg_PXo)

Here in Avon and Somerset this resulted in:

- 64 arrests relating to drugs offences
- 17 warrants carried out in relation to properties and people linked to drugs supply
- Five known county lines disrupted, and approximately 350 pieces of disruption work relating to organised criminal gangs
- 178 visits and or/safeguarding checks to vulnerable people's addresses. The addresses were identified through Avon and Somerset Police's intelligence work and information shared by our partners and the public. Several people visited have been subjected to cuckooing\* in the past
- A range of awareness-raising activities within communities including at least 44 educational visits to schools, youth clubs, colleges and scouting groups, to engage with young people, parents, teachers and other professional practitioners about exploitation and grooming.
- Partnership work across the board. Here in Avon and Somerset we worked closely not only with other police forces but partners including housing agencies, taxi licensing, Border Force, outreach workers, local community leaders, The One25 Project, drug and alcohol support services, health workers and HM Prison Services.
- At least 41 weapons sweeps and 69 additional patrols in areas of high demand for drug dealing/misuse and serious violence.
- A significant number of intelligence reports gathered helping us to better direct resources going forward and to help safeguard vulnerable people

Our work contributed to a South West regional total of 194 arrests, 55 warrants carried out, 320 vulnerability visits and safeguarding referrals being made, 400 drug line disruptions and hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of cash and suspected drugs being seized.

**Our lead for Serious Violence and County Lines, Superintendent James Raphael, said: "This operation allowed us to combine resources, intelligence and enforcement powers with our colleagues in other areas of the South West in a strategic way, sending a clear message to organised criminals and those who cause harm in our communities, that there is no place for them in our region."**

**“Alongside the important enforcement work we carried out the equally important work of safeguarding vulnerable people who find themselves caught up in the misery of drug use and/or supply, through no fault of their own. Working with a number of different partner agencies we are able to help them to access treatment and support and thus reduce demand.**

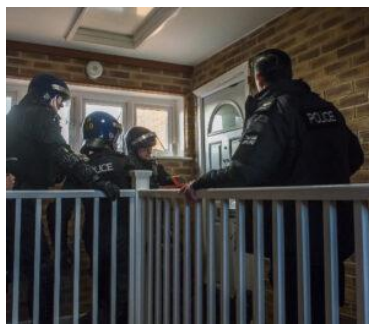
**“Educational and diversionary initiatives in our communities and with schools, youth organisations and our Violence Reduction Units is also essential work to ensure that young people in particular, are aware of the signs of grooming and exploitation and how to get help if they need it.”**

Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner Mark Shelford said: “The results from this collective action speak for themselves and show what can be achieved when a borderless approach to drugs enforcement is taken.

“By coming together collectively in this way, we send a strong message to criminals and those who exploit young and vulnerable people in Avon and Somerset that we will find you, we will follow you and we won’t stop until we’ve got you. The South West is no place for drugs.”

Our work continues so if you have any information about illegal drugs activity that might help, please contact us by calling 101 (999 in an emergency) or reporting online at [www.avonandsomerset.police.uk](http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk) .

*\*Cuckooing is the term used to describe the practice of taking over the home of a vulnerable person in order to establish a base for illegal drug dealing, typically as part of a county lines operation.*



Police drug raids, operation Scorpion 14.3.2022 Copyright Neil Phillips

You can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers 100 per cent anonymously on **0800 555 111** or via their **Anonymous Online Form**.

No personal details are taken, information cannot be traced or recorded and you will not go to court or have to speak to police when contacting Crimestoppers.