



Policing in the UK: Serious and Organised Crime

Summary

Serious and organised crime (SOC) is criminal activity that is planned, coordinated and committed by people working individually, in groups, or as part of transnational networks. It usually centres on acquiring money, profit, influence and power. Sexual gratification is also a motivator in some cases. Such offences are often committed by organised crime groups (OCGs), who use violence, corruption and intimidation to protect their criminal activities.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) has stated that SOC affects more UK citizens, more often, than any other national security threat. It has a daily impact on citizens, public services, businesses, institutions, national reputation and infrastructure.

In the UK, no single official or body is in overall charge of the response to SOC. Rather, there are over 100 government departments, law enforcement bodies, agencies and other organisations involved in tackling this type of crime. Operationally, the NCA leads and coordinates the UK's response. It also publishes an annual national strategic assessment on the issue, highlighting key findings and trends.

The UK Government and the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland and Scotland are responsible for policy, including serious and organised crime. In England and Wales, the Home Office has overall responsibility for policy, strategy and funding, including the publication of the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy. In October 2019, the UK Government announced an independent review, led by Sir Craig Mackay, to support the implementation of the SOC strategy.

There is no dedicated funding stream for tackling serious and organised crime. The work is financed through several unconnected funding streams by sources that are subject to annual bidding and decision processes.

Both the National Audit Office and the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee have recently looked at the UK Government's strategic response to serious and organised crime, arguing that while there are examples of good work, "there remain some significant and avoidable shortcomings". In addition, the director general of the National Crime Agency, Lynne Owens, has called for an increase to the amount of funding aimed at tackling serious and organised crime.

Nicole Winchester | 16 January 2020

A full list of Lords Library briefings is available on the research briefings page on the internet. The Library publishes briefings for all major items of business debated in the House of Lords. The Library also publishes briefings on the House of Lords itself and other subjects that may be of interest to Members. Library briefings are compiled for the benefit of Members of the House of Lords and their personal staff, to provide impartial, authoritative, politically balanced briefing on subjects likely to be of interest to Members of the Lords. Authors are available to discuss the contents of the briefings with the Members and their staff but cannot advise members of the general public.

Any comments on Library briefings should be sent to the Head of Research Services, House of Lords Library, London SW1A 0PW or emailed to purvism@parliament.uk.

I. What is Serious and Organised Crime?

Serious and organised crime (SOC) is criminal activity that is planned, coordinated and committed by people working individually, in groups, or as part of transnational networks.¹ It usually centres on acquiring money, profit, influence and power. Sexual gratification is also a motivator in some cases.²

The activities used to achieve these aims vary widely.³ The most harmful serious and organised crimes fall into the following categories:⁴

- border vulnerabilities (trafficking of criminal commodities across borders);
- illegal firearms;
- cybercrime;
- fraud;
- drug trafficking;
- money laundering and illicit finance;
- modern slavery and human trafficking;
- organised immigration crime;
- kidnap and extortion;
- child sexual abuse and exploitation; and
- bribery, corruption and sanctions evasion.

Such offences are often committed by organised crime groups (OCGs). Both the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime and the European Union use an internationally shared definition of an OCG:

A group of three or more persons existing over a period of time acting in concert with the aim of committing crimes for financial or material benefit.⁵

Those who commit the offences associated with SOC often use violence, corruption and intimidation to protect their criminal activities.⁶ They may also use professionals such as lawyers and accountants for assistance in managing their enterprises.

2. Is Serious and Organised Crime a Problem in the UK?

The National Crime Agency (NCA) has stated that SOC affects more UK citizens, more often, than any other national security threat.⁷ It has a daily impact on citizens, public services, businesses,

¹ National Audit Office, '[Tackling Serious and Organised Crime](#)', 28 June 2019.

² Police Scotland, '[Counter Terrorism and SOC Awareness](#)', accessed 20 November 2019; and National Crime Agency, '[National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime](#)', 2019, p 4.

³ Police Scotland, '[Counter Terrorism and SOC Awareness](#)', accessed 20 November 2019.

⁴ National Crime Agency, '[What We Investigate](#)', accessed 20 November 2019.

⁵ Europol, '[Defining Serious and Organised Crime](#)', accessed 21 November 2019.

⁶ Police Scotland, '[Counter Terrorism and SOC Awareness](#)', accessed 20 November 2019.

⁷ National Crime Agency, '[National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime](#)', 2019, p 4.

institutions, national reputation and infrastructure. Speaking on the effect of SOC, the director general of the National Crime Agency, Lynne Owens, argued that:

Serious and organised crime in the UK is chronic and corrosive, its scale is truly staggering. It kills more people every year than terrorism, war and natural disasters combined.⁸

Providing an overview of the scale of the issue, Ms Owens highlighted some recent statistics to illustrate the growing problems associated with SOC:⁹

- Of the nearly 2.9 million accounts registered on the worst child sexual abuse sites on the dark web worldwide, more than 5% are believed to belong to offenders based in the UK.
- The number of referrals to the NCA from industry reporting online child sexual abuse and exploitation has increased by 700% since 2012.
- Referrals to the NCA of potential victims of modern slavery increased by 36% in 2018 compared with the year before. They have risen 80% since 2016.
- The number of ‘county lines’¹⁰ drug supply lines has increased from 720 to around 2,000 in a little over a year.
- Financial losses from fraud rose by 32% between April and September 2018. In addition, there were 3.6 million incidents of fraud reported in England and Wales in 2018, at an overall cost of £190 billion.

Despite such figures, a large amount of SOC remains hidden or underreported.¹¹ Hidden types of SOC include child sexual exploitation and abuse and modern slavery. Underreported crimes include fraud and cyber-crime. The Government has acknowledged this issue, stating that “the true scale [of SOC] is likely to be greater than we currently know”.¹²

3. Who is Responsible for Tackling Serious and Organised Crime in the UK?

In the UK, no single official or body is in overall charge of the response to SOC.¹³ Rather, there are over 100 government departments, law enforcement bodies, agencies and other organisations involved in tackling this type of crime.¹⁴ Operationally, the NCA leads the UK’s response. From a policy perspective, the UK Government and the devolved administrations are responsible.

⁸ National Crime Agency, ‘[181,000 UK Offenders Fuelling “Chronic and Corrosive” Threat from Serious and Organised Crime](#)’, 14 May 2019.

⁹ National Crime Agency, ‘[Director General Lynne Owens’ Speech on Launch of 2019 National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime](#)’, 14 May 2019.

¹⁰ The county lines method of dealing drugs has seen gangs from major urban areas—such as London, Liverpool and Birmingham—exploiting drug markets in other towns and areas, often using children and vulnerable people. Dealers use dedicated mobile phone lines (‘county lines’) to take orders from drug users (HM Government, [Serious Violence Strategy](#), April 2018, p 22).

¹¹ National Audit Office, [Tackling Serious and Organised Crime](#), 28 June 2019, HC 2219 of session 2017–19, p 5.

¹² HM Government, [Serious and Organised Crime Strategy](#), November 2018, Cm 9718, p 5.

¹³ House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, [Serious and Organised Crime](#), 27 September 2019, HC 2049 of session 2017–19, p 13.

¹⁴ National Audit Office, [Tackling Serious and Organised Crime](#), 28 June 2019, HC 2219 of session 2017–19, p 53. (A full list of all the organisations involved in tackling SOC is available on the same page).

3.1 National Crime Agency

The NCA leads and coordinates the UK's law enforcement response to SOC.¹⁵ It works across the UK—respecting the devolution of policing—as an operationally independent non-ministerial government department.¹⁶ Its work includes:¹⁷

- building the best possible intelligence picture of all serious and organised crime threats;
- pursuing the most serious and dangerous offenders; and
- developing and delivering specialist capabilities on behalf of law enforcement and other partners.

The NCA also houses the UK's international crime bureaux, including Interpol and Europol.¹⁸ The routine exchange of police and law enforcement information is managed through these channels, as is access to international databases and capabilities.¹⁹

In a speech earlier this year, the director general of the National Crime Agency, Lynne Owens, announced the agency's three operational priorities. She said the NCA would target those who:²⁰

- exploit the vulnerable through: child sexual abuse and exploitation; trafficking; servitude; fraud; and other forms of abuse;
- dominate communities and chase profits in the criminal marketplace using violence or criminal reputation in the supply of drugs and firearms; and
- undermine the UK's economy, integrity, infrastructure and institutions through their criminality.

National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2019

Each year the NCA publishes a national strategic assessment of serious and organised crime. It is an intelligence-based assessment and builds on previous work to provide a single picture of the threat to the UK from SOC in the past year. The most recent assessment reported that at the end of June 2018, the NCA had mapped 4,542 OCGs in the UK, with 37,317 people identified as associated with these groups. The 2019 assessment also highlighted the following key findings and trends:²¹

- Financially, the NCA estimated that SOC costs the UK economy at least £37 billion a

¹⁵ National Audit Office, [Tackling Serious and Organised Crime](#), 28 June 2019, HC 2219 of session 2017–19, p 8.

¹⁶ National Crime Agency, ['Governance and Transparency'](#), accessed 29 October 2019.

¹⁷ National Crime Agency, ['Our Mission'](#), accessed 27 November 2019.

¹⁸ Interpol is an inter-governmental organisation made up of 194 member countries which help police across the world work together (Interpol, ['What is Interpol?'](#), accessed 2 December 2019). Europol is the European Union's law enforcement agency (Europol, ['About Europol'](#), accessed 2 December 2019).

¹⁹ National Crime Agency, ['Intelligence: Enhancing the Picture of Serious Organised Crime Affecting the UK'](#), accessed 27 November 2019.

²⁰ National Crime Agency, ['Director General Lynne Owens' Speech on Launch of 2019 National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime'](#), 14 May 2019.

²¹ National Crime Agency, [National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime](#), 2019, pp 4–6.

year, with this cost increasing annually. However, the NCA said that this figure is “highly likely to be a significant underestimate”, particularly in relation to areas such as fraud.

- The NCA found that SOC was having a “devastating effect” on citizens as criminals exploited and defrauded victims in new ways. It also reported this threat was growing in both volume and complexity, impacting a wider range of victims. Although financial gain remained the dominant motivator for SOC overall, the NCA found sexual gratification to be the main motivator in cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation.
- Increasing numbers of children and young adults are becoming involved in SOC. The NCA reported that in parts of the UK, crime groups made up almost exclusively of young people have emerged, using business-like operating models. However, it noted that young people still comprised only a minority of those suspected of involvement with OCGs.
- SOC threats are increasingly interlinked, with poly-criminality (where OCGs engage in more than one criminal activity²²) remaining a key feature. The NCA said that many OCGs continue to be involved in multiple crime types and have adapted their methods in reaction to law enforcement responses. However, some groups, including established OCGs, have not diversified their areas of expertise.
- A number of known SOC actors and OCGs work together in criminal enterprises. The NCA found that new market entrants integrate with existing criminal infrastructure to use established money laundering networks and logistics providers.
- A growing threat has emerged where criminals act individually, without the infrastructure of established OCGs. In areas such as child sexual abuse and exploitation, the NCA stated that it remains relatively uncommon for criminals to work in identifiable networks; rather, like-minded offenders may socialise online.
- The majority of SOC activity in the UK retains a clear international dimension. The NCA reported that OCGs active in the UK continued to source illicit commodities, exploit vulnerable people and defraud UK citizens and businesses from a range of locations. Transnational OCGs were also found to exploit vulnerabilities—including those at borders and in criminal justice structures—to commit crime in the UK and overseas.
- There remains no indication that OCGs active in the UK are cooperating with terrorist groups. The NCA argued that the shift to less sophisticated methodologies by terrorists has made this support less necessary. However, terrorist suspects have previously been known to engage in lower-level crime, such as small-scale fraud to procure funds and equipment.
- The NCA stated that SOC offenders have drawn on a range of “cross-cutting enablers” to carry out their criminal activities, including: the use of technology; border vulnerabilities; corruption in the UK; and prisoners, plus those on licence.

3.2 UK Government

In the UK, justice and policing is a devolved policy area, with the administrations in Northern Ireland and Scotland responsible for policy, including the response to SOC in their county.²³

²² Europol, ‘[Organised Crime Groups \(OCGs\) and Other Criminal Actors](#)’, accessed 21 November 2019.

²³ Civil Service, ‘[Devolution: Factsheet](#)’, accessed 22 November 2019.

In England and Wales, the Home Office has overall responsibility for SOC policy, strategy and funding. It also has responsibility for coordinating the contributions to: the NCA; nine regional organised crime units (ROCU); 43 territorial police forces; and other law enforcement partners such as the British Transport Police and the Serious Fraud Office. A director general leads the department's response and is also the senior responsible owner for the development and implementation of the serious and organised crime strategy.²⁴

Regional Organised Crime Units

ROCU are regional police units that provide a range of specialist policing capabilities at a regional level to help forces tackle SOC.

(Source: National Crime Agency, [National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime](#), 2019, p 8)

Serious and Organised Crime Strategy

The UK Government published a serious and organised crime strategy in 2013, with a revised version issued in 2018.²⁵ Although the devolved administrations in Northern Ireland and Scotland have published their own strategies, they also contributed to the 2018 Home Office-led cross-government strategy. Other government departments and agencies, local police forces and the private sector were also involved in creating the strategy.

Both the 2013 and 2018 strategies use a framework based on four 'P' work strands:

- **prevent** people from getting involved in organised crime;
- **pursue** and disrupt serious and organised criminals;
- **protect** individuals, organisations and communities against serious and organised criminality; and
- **prepare** for when serious and organised crime occurs and mitigate its impact.²⁶

In the revised strategy, the Government stated that "despite significant progress, the scale of the challenge we face is stark and we have therefore revised our approach".²⁷ Outlining this, the Government set out four objectives to:²⁸

- target and relentlessly disrupt the SOC criminals and networks that cause the most harm;
- build the highest levels of defence and resilience in vulnerable people, communities, businesses and systems;
- stop the problem at source, and identify and support those at risk of engaging in criminality; and
- establish a single, whole-system approach.

²⁴ National Audit Office, [Tackling Serious and Organised Crime](#), 28 June 2019, HC 2219 of session 2017–19, p 8.

²⁵ HM Government, [Serious and Organised Crime Strategy](#), November 2018, Cm 9718.

²⁶ National Audit Office, [Tackling Serious and Organised Crime](#), 28 June 2019, HC 2219 of session 2017–19, p 5.

²⁷ HM Government, [Serious and Organised Crime Strategy](#), November 2018, Cm 9718, p 6.

²⁸ *ibid*, pp 6–7.

²⁸ *ibid*.

More recently, in October 2019, the Government announced an independent review to look at the full spectrum of SOC.²⁹ Led by Sir Craig Mackey, a former deputy commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, the review aims to support the implementation of the SOC strategy. It will consider the powers, capabilities, governance and funding required by law enforcement and the justice system to tackle current threats posed by SOC. Sir Craig is due to deliver the report to the Government in Spring 2020. In addition, the Government made a commitment to strengthen the NCA in its 2019 general election manifesto.³⁰

Funding

There is no dedicated funding stream for tackling SOC.³¹ Instead, work is financed through several unconnected funding streams by sources that are subject to annual bidding and decision processes. In 2018/19, funding included:³²

- £424 million for the NCA from HM Treasury;
- £123 million for ROCUs from police and crime commissioners;
- £25 million annual departmental grant to ROCUs, made up of multiple funding sources;
- £40 million for forces, ROCUs, the NCA and the Home Office from the Police Transformation Fund;
- £21 million from the Government's Conflict, Stability and Security Fund (CSSF); and
- a contribution from the Cabinet Office's National Cyber Security Programme.

Additionally, the National Audit Office (NAO) estimated that police and crime commissioners spent one-sixth of their overall budget for policing on forces' work to tackle SOC. Focusing on local spending, the NAO stated that in 2015/16 police and crime commissioners spent an estimated £1.8 billion (out of £2.9 billion total expenditure) to tackle SOC locally.³³

The NAO also looked at the amount of funding spent on preventing SOC versus pursuing offenders. It stated that 79% of the estimated front-line spending by government and law enforcement bodies to tackle crime in 2015/16 went on pursuing serious and organised criminals. However, 4% of estimated front-line spending by government and law enforcement bodies to tackle crime was spent on preventing serious and organised crime. The Home Office identified this difference in funding in its review of the 2018 strategy. It meant that while criminals were stopped or less able to operate, the response to SOC had not been comprehensive and had "done little to address the vulnerabilities that drive, enable and perpetuate serious and organised crime".³⁴

²⁹ Home Office, '[New Review Will Enhance Response to Serious and Organised Crime](#)', 29 October 2019.

³⁰ Conservative Party, '[Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#)', November 2019, p 19.

³¹ National Crime Agency, '[Director General Lynne Owens' Speech on Launch of 2019 National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime](#)', 14 May 2019; and National Audit Office, '[Tackling Serious and Organised Crime](#)', 28 June 2019, HC 2219 of session 2017–19, p 35.

³² National Audit Office, '[Tackling Serious and Organised Crime](#)', 28 June 2019, HC 2219 of session 2017–19, p 11.

³³ *ibid*, p 4.

³⁴ *ibid*, p 11.

4. Commentary on UK Government Policy and Funding

Value for Money and Impact

In June 2019, the NAO published a report examining the Government's strategic response to SOC. Contextualising the issue, it reported that SOC is evolving at a "rapid rate".³⁵ New trends were found to be fuelled by criminal networks identifying new vulnerabilities, adapting their response to law enforcement and taking advantage of the opportunities offered by recent technology.

Focusing on the Government's strategic response, the NAO stated that "those tackling serious and organised crime recognise the seriousness of this challenge and have plans in place to build the teams and expertise to deal with it".³⁶ It also said that there were examples of improved collaboration across government and beyond to disrupt criminal groups, safeguard vulnerable people and seize illegal goods. However, the NAO also argued that:

There remain some significant and avoidable shortcomings that may prevent government and its partners from meeting its aim to "rid our society of the harms of serious and organised crime".³⁷

Highlighting key issues, the NAO claimed that the Home Office and the NCA do not know whether their efforts are working and are not yet able to target resources against the highest-priority threats. It also found that despite ongoing efforts, governance and funding arrangements remain "complex, inefficient and uncertain". As a result, it stated that the Government is not yet able to show that it is delivering value for money in tackling SOC.

Following the NAO's report, the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee also examined the Home Office and NCA's approach to tackling SOC.³⁸ The inquiry looked at: how plans and goals are set; how performance is managed; and how funding and resources are allocated. The committee published its report in September 2019. Examining the size of the issue, it found that SOC in the UK was increasing, difficult to tackle, broad and varied in nature, and hidden from view.³⁹ Focusing on its impact, the committee argued that SOC caused considerable harm to individuals and communities.

The committee argued that despite launching the 2018 strategy, the Government "does not yet fully understand the threats from serious and organised crime". It also highlighted the following issues:⁴⁰

- The Government does not have the right data to measure success or the performance of government or law enforcement bodies in tackling SOC.
- Government and law enforcement bodies focus on pursuing criminals after the crime has been committed at the expense of prevention work to stop the crime from happening

³⁵ National Audit Office, [Tackling Serious and Organised Crime](#), 28 June 2019, HC 2219 of session 2017–19, p 14.

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, '[Serious and Organised Crime Inquiry](#)', accessed 22 November 2019.

³⁹ House of Commons Public Accounts Committee, [Serious and Organised Crime](#), 27 September 2019, HC 2049 of session 2017–19, p 3.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

in the first place.

- The Home Office is currently not using “all the levers” it has at its disposal to ensure that law enforcement bodies at local, regional and national levels prioritise work to better tackle SOC.
- Without a better system, police forces will continue to focus most of their resources on local priorities, which will not necessarily reflect or help address national priorities in relation to SOC.
- There is still confusion over the role that law enforcement bodies at each level should play in tackling SOC.
- Funding mechanisms are complicated and short term—a problem compounded by uncertainties surrounding the delayed 2019 Spending Review.

The Government had yet to respond to the committee’s report when Parliament was dissolved for the 2019 general election.

Funding

Lynne Owens, director general of the National Crime Agency, has also highlighted the issue of funding. Speaking at the release of the NCA’s annual national strategic assessment, she called on the Government to increase the amount of money aimed at tackling SOC. She stated that law enforcement is “under pressure as never before [...] just at the point in time where resources are under the greatest strain”.⁴¹ To address this, Ms Owens argued that the law enforcement system needed investment of an additional £2.7 billion over three years. This would mean increasing the NCA’s annual budget by £650 million to £1 billion, which Ms Owens reported is “less than serious and organised crime costs the country each and every week”.

Focusing on the purpose of the funding, Ms Owens stated that it would enable the NCA to resource growing demand and build capacities in areas including: digital forensics; covert surveillance; and financial investigations. The *Guardian* reported that the Home Office would not comment on increasing funding, but said:

We continue to invest in the right capabilities and tools in law enforcement, across government and in partnership with the private sector.⁴²

Partnerships

Ms Owens also addressed the role of the technology and financial sectors, as well as international partnerships.⁴³ She called on the technology sector to work with law enforcement, asking it to offer its expertise and reduce criminal abuse on its platforms. Ms Owens also requested help from financial and other regulated sectors to help “crack down on illicit finance that underpins and rewards

⁴¹ National Crime Agency, ‘[Director General Lynne Owens’ Speech on Launch of 2019 National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime](#)’, 14 May 2019.

⁴² Vikram Dodd, ‘[Spend £2.7bn More to Tackle Organised Crime, Says NCA Chief](#)’, *Guardian*, 14 May 2019.

⁴³ National Crime Agency, ‘[Director General Lynne Owens’ Speech on Launch of 2019 National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime](#)’, 14 May 2019.

criminality”. In addition, Ms Owens highlighted the importance of international partnerships. She stated that the majority of SOC in the UK continue to have clear international links, with OCGs in the UK sourcing illegal commodities from abroad and exploiting vulnerable people internationally.⁴⁴

Brexit

Currently, the NCA and international partners work together through various agreements to tackle the global reach of SOC. However, the UK’s plans to leave the European Union have raised questions about how Brexit could affect the fight against SOC. The NCA has said that the EU law enforcement tools that the UK currently uses “are some of the most efficient and effective mechanisms for partnerships working that are available anywhere in the world”.⁴⁵ It has argued that, as a result, the NCA would be less effective should the current levels of access to such partnerships not be maintained. Ms Owens raised this issue when giving evidence to the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee. She argued that Brexit could impact on the UK’s access to intelligence and that criminals could exploit loopholes which may develop:

It is fair to say that at this moment in time, in terms of the actual nature of serious and organised crime itself, we do not think that we will see any change in the nature of crime, but we do know that serious and organised criminals are wily. Therefore, they will adapt their behaviour and working practices depending on the arrangements that are put in place.⁴⁶

Responding to the committee’s report, the Government highlighted that during the implementation period, the UK will continue to participate in all EU law enforcement tools.⁴⁷ The implementation period is currently due to start after the UK leaves the European Union on 31 January 2020 and ceases at the end of December 2020.⁴⁸ However, concerns have been raised about the likelihood of a deal being reached by December 2020. Michel Barnier, Head of Task Force for Relations with the UK, has labelled plans to reach a deal by the end of 2020 “unrealistic”. Instead he argued that the period would enable the “vital minimum” to be achieved in regard to the economy and security, or for preparations to be made for a “cliff-edge”.⁴⁹ Under the withdrawal agreement the implementation period can be extended by up to two years if jointly agreed. However, the Government has included a clause in the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill, the legislation required to implement the agreement in UK domestic law, that would prevent the Government from agreeing to any extension. The Prime Minister has argued that this would strengthen the UK’s negotiating position.⁵⁰

⁴⁴ National Crime Agency, ‘[Director General Lynne Owens Speech on Launch of 2019 National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime](#)’, 14 May 2019.

⁴⁵ National Crime Agency, ‘[NCA Statement on Contingency Planning in Relation to UK Withdrawal from the European Union](#)’, accessed 9 December 2019.

⁴⁶ House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, [Oral Evidence: Government Preparations for Brexit: Border and Security Operations, HC 1674](#), 30 October 2018, Q217.

⁴⁷ House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, [Home Office Preparations for the UK Exiting the EU: Government Response to the Committee’s Twelfth Report of Session 2017–19](#), 26 February 2019, HC 1985 of session 2017–19, p 1.

⁴⁸ George Parker, James Blitz, Sebastian Payne and Jim Brunnsden, ‘[Boris Johnson to Shut Door on Extending Brexit Transition](#)’, *Financial Times* (£), 17 December 2019.

⁴⁹ Anahita Hossein-Pour, ‘[Blow for Boris Johnson as Michel Barnier Says His Trade Talks Timetable is ‘Unrealistic’](#)’, *Politics Home*, 11 December 2019.

⁵⁰ [HC Hansard, 20 December 2019, col 146](#).

Focusing on the future relationship, the revised political declaration agreed by the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, in October 2019 states that the parties will aim to:

Provide for comprehensive, close, balanced and reciprocal law enforcement and judicial cooperation in criminal matters, with the view to delivering strong operational capabilities for the purposes of the prevention, investigation, detection and prosecution of criminal offences, taking into account the geographic proximity, shared and evolving threats the Parties face, the mutual benefits to the safety and security of their citizens, and the fact that the United Kingdom will be a non-Schengen third country that does not provide for the free movement of persons.⁵¹

In addition, when responding to questions on cooperation post Brexit, the Home Secretary, Priti Patel, stated: “there must be no doubt that even after we leave the EU, that cooperation will continue”.⁵² However, concerns have been highlighted about the impact of Brexit on law enforcement. For example, Lord Evans of Weardale (Crossbench), a former director-general of the security services, has argued that there is no “security upside” to Brexit, rather, that the task is to “minimise the downside”.⁵³

In the October 2019 Queen’s Speech, the Government announced that it would introduce a new bill to give police the powers they need to tackle transnational crime and pursue international criminals.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the Conservative Party 2019 general election manifesto stated that “we will use our new freedoms after Brexit to prevent more foreign national offenders entering our country”.⁵⁵ The Government reiterated these commitments in the December 2019 Queen’s Speech.⁵⁶

5. Further Information

- House of Lords Library, [Proposed UK-EU Security Treaty](#), 23 May 2018
- Gary Craig, Alex Balch, Hannah Lewis and Louise Waite, *The Modern Slavery Agenda: Policy, Politics and Practice in the UK*, 2019
- Jonathan Lusthaus, *Industry of Anonymity: the Business of Cybercrime*, 2018
- Katalin Ligeti and Michele Simonato, *Chasing Criminal Money: Challenges and Perspectives on Asset Recovery in the EU*, 2017
- Siddharth Kara, *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery*, 2010

⁵¹ HM Government, [Political Declaration Setting Out the Framework for the Future Relationship Between the European Union and the United Kingdom](#), 18 October 2019, p 15.

⁵² [HC Hansard, 28 October 2019, col 30](#).

⁵³ Lizzie Dearden, “[‘There Is No Upside’ for UK’s National Security After Brexit, Former Head of MI5 Says](#)”, *Independent*, 30 October 2019.

⁵⁴ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 14 October 2019, p 52.

⁵⁵ Conservative Party, [Conservative Party Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019, p 18.

⁵⁶ Prime Minister’s Office, [Queen’s Speech December 2019: Background Briefing Notes](#), 19 December 2019, pp 82–4.