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In the Blood

World-renowned forensic toxicologist Dr Simon Elliott used his expertise to help the Met convict serial killer Stephen Port of the murders of four young men after he plied them with fatal doses of the drug GHB. Here he talks to Carol Jenkins about the dangers of GHB and its use in crimes and accidental drug deaths.

When forensic toxicologist Simon Elliott completed his PhD on the so called 'date rape' drug GHB, he couldn't have predicted that his expertise would turn out to be vital in helping the Met Police convict serial killer Stephen Port of one of the most shocking and unique set of murders the UK has ever seen.

Simon is one of only 2,000 forensic toxicologists in the world and during his 30-year career, has worked on an impressive 40,000 cases. He began his career working in the toxicology lab at Birmingham City Hospital where he rose to the position of section head of forensic toxicology.

It was in those early days that Simon began to provide his expertise to the then Forensic Science Service. When he left the NHS, he set up his own toxicology laboratory and then ten years later he

began working as an independent consultant. He is now renowned across the world for his work.

He has provided his expertise in many complex cases including the case in Manchester of Reynhard Sinaga (dubbed the 'world's worst rapist' by the media) who was convicted of 136 counts of rape involving over 40 male victims, suspected of having used the drug GHB.

However, he admits the Stephen Port investigation was one of the most unique investigations he has been involved in.

'The reason the Stephen Port investigation was so challenging and very different to many other investigations I have worked on is that in this case drugs were used as a murder weapon and this is quite rare these days.



Stephen Port

'If you look back in history to the nineteenth century, substances such as arsenic, cyanide and strychnine were used as murder weapons then.

'However, these days, most drug deaths are as a result of people who have taken too many drugs and have accidentally killed themselves. Using drugs as a murder weapon is very rare.'

Legal

Despite the fact the GHB has been coined as a 'date rape drug', Simon emphasises the fact that this isn't accurate because the use of GHB doesn't always occur on a date and doesn't always involve the legal offence of rape.

US police were the first to name offences where GHB and other drugs were used in sexual assaults. They describe these offences as Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault, while in the UK we refer to them as Drug Assisted Sexual Assault.

'There is a difference here between assisted and facilitated, explains Simon.

'Facilitated means that the drug brought about the offence, but assisted means that it assisted the offence. If you think about it both occur.'

'There have been some studies looking at predatory and opportunistic sexual assault cases involving drugs and what was found was that alcohol and cocaine would be considered opportunistic because essentially the person didn't set out to give alcohol to people and they didn't go out there with cocaine to give it to people and then rape them.

'What happened was they were in a situation where someone was taking too many drugs or drink and the perpetrator took advantage of them. It would be drug assisted sexual assault, but drug facilitated is more of the predatory nature of things.'

Fatal

Alcohol has historically been associated with these crimes, but the Stephen Port case highlighted that the drugs GHB and GBL could be used in such crimes and could prove potentially fatal. GBL is an industrial solvent that is a precursor of GHB in that if you take GBL, it converts to GHB in the body.

GHB is a Class B drug that is readily available online and has had a chequered history over the past 60 years.

It was first established in the 1960s as an anaesthetic but it was discontinued when it was found that whilst some patients would be sedated through their operation, some would sporadically wake up or have body twitches.

History

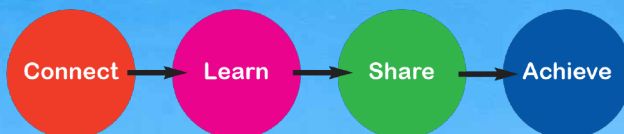
In the 1970s and 1980s, GHB was used by the body building community as a drug to stimulate growth hormone while sleeping. This however was a myth as there has been no evidence to prove that GHB can directly build muscle mass.

In the 1990s during the era of recreational drug use linked to the rave scene, GHB was used in liquid form and called liquid ecstasy due to its euphoric effects.

The Stephen Port case highlighted just how challenging it can be for investigators to detect whether GHB has been used in an offence or incident as it only remains in the urine for up to 12 hours and blood for up to 8 hours so can be difficult to detect.

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Simon emphasises the importance of raising awareness among investigators about the use of GHB and GBL in potential offences.

‘Time is of the essence here as the drugs only remain in the urine for 12 hours, so if investigators suspect GHB or GBL have been used in a crime or investigation then they should contact a forensic toxicologist at the earliest opportunity,’ he explains.

‘GHB and GBL have also been involved in a number of accidental deaths. The biggest concern is that it’s very easy to die from accidentally if you get your dose wrong and especially mix it with alcohol. There have been a number of cases where people have died from overdoses from likely not knowing the risks.’

Concern

Growing concerns over the potential dangers associated with GHB, prompted the reclassification on the drug from Class C to Class B in 2021. However, Simon is doubtful that this reclassification will do much to deter users. If someone is convicted of possession of a Class C drug this carries a maximum sentence of two years in prison and a Class B drug results in an increase of only a further three years to a maximum of five years in prison. In terms of supply, the maximum prison sentence is up to 14 years with both Class B and C drugs.

Education

The solution, he says is education and more effective public safety campaigns.

‘The solution is always education. It’s a public health responsibility. For many years, I don’t think we’ve properly explained to potential users the serious impact these drugs can have on them,’ he says.

‘We need a public safety campaign that explains the fact that GHB and GBL can kill. We should also educate people against being in situations where you could be vulnerable to GHB and GBL.’

Beyond GHB and GBL, the fact that the Psychoactive Substances Act makes it illegal to sell drugs on the internet in the UK, has only led to drugs being available to people in the UK from



Simon Elliott

other countries through websites not based in the UK.

‘We really need to be doing more to warn potential users against buying drugs on the internet as you really don’t know what you’re getting.’

Awareness

Looking to the future, Simon says he will continue raising awareness of the effects of GHB and GBL both to investigators and the wider public not just in the UK but across the world. On an international level, he sits on the Expert Committee for Drug Dependence at the World Health Organisation as well as working with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to monitor global drug use and spot any trends or concerns.

Simon continues to work with police forces and other law enforcement agencies in the UK and across the world to try and make a difference and educate about drugs within criminal and other contexts. He hopes his legacy will be that he has been an innovator who has added unique value to the investigations he has worked on.

‘I like to think that in the many investigations I’ve worked on, I’ve discovered information and come up with solutions I don’t think anyone else would have found. There are a number of occasions that I know I went that extra mile and for that I feel extremely proud.’

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Interviewing Innovator



Gary Shaw, MBE was at the forefront of the revolution to professionalise the investigative interview during his impressive 45-year policing career. He speaks to Carol Jenkins about his career and his new role in academia.

When Gary Shaw, MBE joined the police service in 1977, he had no idea just how much of an impact he would make on revolutionising the way police conduct investigative interviews. He served as the National interview Advisor from 2003-2018 in which he advised on many of the major crime cases as well as touring the UK to conduct training and spread best practice. He also introduced the role of force Interview advisors which ensured that each organisation had access to a dedicated expert.

Recognition

He was recognised for his work with an MBE in 2018, the year he retired from the police service after an impressive 45 years' service. In the same year, he took up the position of Professor of Professional Practice at the University of Sunderland where he is currently putting his experience to good use to advise and mentor the next generation of investigators.

Gary is also currently establishing an innovative

Centre for Crime, Policing and Investigation at the university which offers a pathway for those who wish to embark on a career in related professions together with the provision of continuous professional development opportunities for those currently operating within this area.

There are a number of programmes ranging from investigative diplomas in the investigative interviewing of victims, witnesses and suspects including family liaison co-ordination. There is also a degree course which is a BA (Hons) in Applied Investigation and an MA in Investigative Management

Experiences

Reflecting on the early days of his experiences of interviewing as a young recruit, Gary acknowledges, that it was a very different experience to that of today's new recruits. 'I remember becoming involved with the CID from an early stage in my career with various secondments and so the interview was a key part

of my role in those early days,' he explained. 'It was before the days of PEACE and the established interview style was that of a persuasive, confession-based style, where interviews weren't recorded, and instead written summaries produced.'

As a result of a number of high-profile cases involving false confessions, the PEACE interviewing model was introduced and that completely changed the culture of investigative interviewing in the UK and across the world. The PEACE model moved away from the confession-based style of interviewing to a style based on conversation management. Interviews were also tape recorded to ensure a more professional approach.

PEACE Model

The PEACE Model came into force thirty years ago in 1993 and as a DS, Gary began delivering training within his force. He also began talking to CID officers about the high-profile cases he was involved in before being asked the following year to become involved in a national project around investigation interviewing.

Despite the fact PEACE interviews are now an established part of the investigation process, Gary admits that in the early days it was difficult to introduce and embed this new approach.

'It was a real challenge because investigators were brought up with the confession based culture and it was a big shock to the system when PEACE was introduced,' he explained. However, he acknowledges that it was a 'significant turning point in the development of criminal investigation'.

National

The introduction of the first Investigative Interviewing National Steering Group was the point at which his national work really came alive, and he began being spearheading the introduction of national policy as well as going into forces and advising them on 'live' jobs.

The National Crime Faculty was launched in 1995 and Gary began working for the faculty. This stepped up a gear in 2003 when Gary was appointed to the then ACPO National interview Advisor.

'My goal was to make the theory that I taught in the classroom relevant to the operational environment and to bridge the gap between theory and practice,' he explained.

Consistency

The fact that Gary was advising on jobs around the UK meant that he could ensure consistency and introduce a set of national stands that became a formal National Framework that involved the setting up of the force interview advisors.

His work continued when the National Policing Improvement Agency was introduced in 2007 and he spent the next eleven years revolutionising the way investigative interviewing was conducted in forces and other organisations.

Championing

This was until his retirement in 2018 when academia beckoned, and Gary was appointed Professor of Professional Practice at the University of Sunderland. He sees this role as a continuation of his role in the police in that he is still championing the importance of continuous professional development and encouraging investigators to take responsibility for their own CPD.

'My work at the university is also about continuing to bring CPD alive for investigators and to encourage them to continue learning and ensuring they are up to speed with current guidance and developments,' he said.

'We offer a range of professional qualifications at the university that are operationally focussed. Even though degrees are seen as an acknowledgment of somebody's skills and abilities, it's not just about the piece of paper investigators get at the end of the courses. It's more about the journey of learning and personal and professional development they achieve along the way'.

Research

A key part of the degree and diploma programmes at the University of Sunderland is that investigators are required to undertake work-based research projects around a topic of their choice. This not only counts towards an end qualification, but the projects are also valuable examples of best practice that can be used by the university and



He hopes the number of individual investigators undertaking -could you insert further study here so it reads - he hopes the number of individual investigators undertaking further study will increase.

'Keeping current is very challenging in today's policing environment as everybody's workload has increased. However, if you don't

stay current and take responsibility for your own learning then you very quickly get left behind,' he said.

forces and other organisations to inform future work.

The qualifications are open to all investigators who can complete their study online and by attending the main campus in Sunderland. There is also now a base in London and Scotland.

Diplomas

Gary is currently working with a number of forces to introduce work-based diplomas in all aspects of criminal investigation. The learning is provided by the university, but the force then provides the accreditation. Individual investigators can also undertake a diploma to further their own CPD.

'As an investigator, I never sat back and waited for people to put stuff in my lap. I went out and made things happen for myself. Our role at the university is to provide on-going opportunities for all investigators and to support, inspire and mentor them to enable them to reach their full potential.'

If you would like to find out more about the courses and opportunities for future learning at the University of Sunderland, visit:
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Interview Revolution

Renowned investigator-turned-professor Gary Shaw, MBE helped transform police interview techniques and brought his expertise to the Nikki Allan murder case, report by the University of Sunderland.

Former detective and investigations expert Gary Shaw who has advised in some of the UK's most high-profile crimes was called in to share his expertise with police officers during interviews with the killer of schoolgirl Nikki Allan.

David Boyd was sentenced to life imprisonment this recently, with a minimum term of 29 years, for the seven-year-old's murder in October 1992 at an abandoned warehouse close to her Sunderland home.

Another neighbour, George Heron, who lived in the same flats as Nikki, was initially charged with her murder after being subjected to oppressive questioning by police, making a false 'confession' which was ruled inadmissible by a judge at the time. Heron was acquitted in 1993.

Catalyst

The acquittal led to a catalyst for changes at a national level in the way police interviews were conducted, thanks to the guidance of Gary Shaw.

Now a Professor of Professional Practice at the University of Sunderland, Gary has spent 45 years as a renowned investigator, revolutionising techniques used by detectives when interviewing suspects. Following a review into George Heron's "unreliable" confession in 1994, Gary put together a Guide for Police Trainers which was distributed nationally in order that the

police could learn the lessons from the interview. 'The PEACE model of interviewing which was introduced at the time of the Nikki Allan murder case continues to be the national model for the police and has been adopted by other jurisdictions,' says Gary.

Advances

When the case was reopened in 2017, advances in forensic science enabled police to link DNA found on Nikki to Boyd, 55, of Stockton-on-Tees. And Boyd's arrest brought Gary back to the case.

He explains: 'I was involved in supporting Northumbria Police with putting together an interview strategy for Boyd.

'I monitored the interviews live when they were being conducted too. I believe that the interview of Boyd had an important part to play in the investigation which brought the strands of the investigative material that had been gathered during the re-investigation together. 'Boyd spoke throughout the interviews only deciding to indicate 'No Comment' after the introduction of the exact location of his DNA in the latter stages of the process.

'I am pleased that I was able to perform a supportive role as part of the excellent team that finally brought the killer to justice.'



Structure

Gary believes the reason the PEACE model has stood the test of time is that it is still an effective structure that is supported by sound principles of how police approach the gathering of information from a suspected person.

He says: 'The main principle is that the interviewer is seeking accurate and reliable information which can help to prove or disprove someone's involvement in an offence.'

'How an interviewee is dealt with in a professional manner is fundamental to creating a conducive environment that affords the suspect an opportunity to give an account if they chose to do so.'

'The model is not guilt presumptive as the confession-based approach was in the past, but if the interviewer is in possession of contradictory information to the account given, a suspect will still be challenged in respect of this.'

'The important part is that they are challenged in a way that is acceptable in line with the existing legislation. Vulnerable people are given particular consideration at all times.'

Apology

Northumbria Police has written to George Heron to apologise, an apology also extended to Nikki's family including her mother, Sharon Henderson, who has never stopped campaigning to get justice.

Gary, who teaches students on the BA in Applied Investigation and MA in Investigative Management programmes at the University, also leads the Centre for Crime, Policing and Investigations, working with several forces in investigative interview diplomas and research-based degrees to assist in the continuous professional development of officers.

Before joining the University, Gary had a distinguished career with Northumbria Police, during which time he became the National Interview Advisor, spending time at police forces across the country examining interview techniques and putting into place a new strategy when it came to interviewing suspects.

Some of the high-profile cases he worked on included the 2010 murder of Joanna Yeates in Bristol to the 2008 disappearance of West Yorkshire schoolgirl Shannon Matthews. From the 2005 shooting of police officer Sharon Beshenivsky to the 2015 headline-making case where Emile Cilliers tried to kill his wife Victoria by tampering with her parachute before a skydive.

Fuelling Fraud: INTERPOL has released new research on the growing phenomenon of Human Trafficking Fraud. The Investigator reports.

New research from INTERPOL highlights an alarming trend in Human Trafficking Fraud, where victims are lured through fake job ads to online scam centres and forced to commit cyber-enabled financial crime on an industrial scale.

The crime trend, which has seen tens of thousands trafficked in Southeast Asia and many more defrauded around the world, has attracted media attention and prompted government and civil society responses.

Serious

The INTERPOL research warns that the Modus Operandi (MO) is escalating rapidly, taking on a new global dimension, and that the crime trend is likely much more entrenched than previously thought. The Organisation has issued an Orange Notice to its membership on the trend – a global warning regarding a serious and imminent threat to public safety.

Initially, online scam centres were concentrated in Cambodia, with further trafficking hubs later identified in Laos and Myanmar. Recently trafficking hubs have been identified in at least four more Asian countries, and there is evidence that the MO is being replicated in other regions such as West Africa, where cyber-enabled financial crime is already prevalent.

Increased

The geographical diversity of both sets of victims has also dramatically increased. While initial human trafficking victims were Chinese-speaking, drawn from China, Malaysia, Thailand or Singapore, victims have since been trafficked to the region from as far afield as South America, East Africa and Western Europe.

‘What began as a regional crime threat has become a global human trafficking crisis,’ said Jürgen Stock, INTERPOL Secretary General.

He said that anyone could fall victim to either the human trafficking or the online scams carried out through these criminal hubs.

‘Much stronger international police cooperation is needed to stop this crime trend from spreading further.’

Lucrative

Interpol says reports of the crime first emerged two years ago. Criminal groups posted false promises of

lucrative job opportunities on social networks and recruitment sites, only to kidnap and detain the unsuspecting applicants in inhuman living conditions while engaging the victims in forced criminality, mainly online fraud.

The online scam centres represent a double-edged crime threat, exploiting two sets of victims. On the one side, victims drawn into the human trafficking schemes are subject to forced labour and often extortion through a type of debt bondage, as well as beatings, sexual exploitation, torture, rape and even alleged organ harvesting in some cases.

Perpetrate

The trafficked workers are used to perpetrate a range of online fraud on a second set of victims, increasingly scattered around the world. The schemes include investment fraud, romance scams and frauds linked to cryptocurrency investing and online gambling.

INTERPOL ran Operation Storm Maker last year to target human trafficking and migrant smuggling. This resulted in further information on this growing trend. The operation led INTERPOL to issue a Purple Notice, a global police alert detailing new criminal modus operandi, entitled ‘Social media recruitment for forced labour in Southeast Asia.’

Vulnerabilities

The scale of the trafficking, and its particular nexus with cyber fraud, have been unprecedented, exploiting specific vulnerabilities of the post-pandemic landscape.

As the diversity of the trafficking victims has increased, so has the geographical diversity of online scam victims targeted, as the former bring in new languages and cultural awareness that can be exploited by criminal operators. Online fraud victims targeted by the centres were initially mainly of Chinese origin, yet are increasingly located in North America, Europe and other parts of Asia.

In parallel, the sophistication of the scam centres has also increased. To address this increasingly global threat, INTERPOL is calling for greater intelligence exchange between law enforcement, non-governmental organisations, financial intelligence units and relevant private sector companies.

Love Bombing



New guidance urges prosecutors to identify manipulative behaviours including ‘love bombing’ that could be deployed by suspects after being charged with controlling offences. The Investigator reports.

The Crown Prosecution Service has issued new guidance on controlling behaviour which emphasises the need for prosecutors to scrutinise the actions of a suspect, who can often take steps to disrupt or mislead criminal proceedings.

The CPS prosecution guidance on controlling and coercive behaviour and stalking or harassment has

been updated and advises prosecutors about the different tactics a suspect can use.

Control

These tactics include ‘love-bombing’ which involves the suspect carrying out loving acts, including sending flowers, between other behaviour to confuse the victim and gain more control.

Once an investigation is underway, a suspect may then make counter-allegations of abuse, argue their actions were in self-defence, actively mislead the investigation with their behaviour and even apply for non-molestation orders or ask courts to vary restraining orders to exert more control over the victim.

Evidence

The CPS advises that by looking at the evidence surrounding a suspect's actions, prosecutors can help inform and support investigators in building a robust case. This evidence will also enable an accurate assessment of the risk, so that the necessary support can be put in place for a victim.

Chief Crown Prosecutor Kate Brown, National Lead for Domestic Abuse at the CPS, said: 'We do not underestimate the impact of stalking or controlling or coercive behaviour on victims who can be forced to change their daily routines, left in fear of their life and totally consumed by this offending.'

Behaviour

Kate said that prosecutors 'consider all the evidence, including how a suspect's actions have impacted the victim, to build a picture of their manipulative behaviour and present a robust case in court.'

'These controlling offences can quickly escalate and that is why we're absolutely committed to prosecuting wherever our legal test is met and will always seek out relevant orders to protect victims.'

'Bringing offenders of violence against women and girls to justice is our priority and we are working hard to drive improvements for victims of these crimes.'

Identifying

London's Victims' Commissioner, Claire Waxman welcomed the new guidance and spoke about the importance of better identifying and helping victims who are experiencing stalking or controlling and coercive behaviour.

'This was always going to be difficult guidance to clarify, as we do see similar behaviours of suspects with these offences.'

'That's why it's critical that this guidance is supported with specialist training for both Police and Prosecutors to help them better identify the behaviour of suspects, the risk to victims, and ensure the right charges are being applied in these complex cases.'

Suky Bhaker, the CEO, Suzy Lamplugh Trust said that it was critical that stalking behaviours are correctly identified by criminal justice professionals in order to

appropriately manage perpetrators and mitigate risks to victims.

Behaviour

The CPS explained that prosecutors are being asked to consider how an offender's actions have impacted a victim's behaviour when making a charging decision as people may respond to abuse in several ways. When assessing the impact of offending, the guidance sets out how prosecutors should look for evidence showing changes a victim has made to their lifestyle.

The updated guidance emphasises the importance of considering stalking, harassment and controlling or coercive behaviour alongside other available charges, in that order, when dealing with conduct which overlaps these offences.

This is because stalking or harassment offences have greater sentencing powers and for stalking there's also the ability to apply for additional protective orders by way of Stalking Protection Orders.

For example, monitoring a person's movement or social media may constitute both stalking and controlling or coercive behaviour, while controlling who they meet and when they leave the house may constitute both harassment and controlling or coercive behaviour.

The changes in the updated prosecution guidance build on wider efforts to make lasting changes for victims of these offences. This year, the CPS started work with the police on developing a joint justice plan to improve the collective handling of domestic abuse cases which is due to be published at the end of the year.

Key Facts

Charging rate for domestic abuse cases is around 75 per cent, meaning of the cases brought to the CPS by police for a decision that it charges 75 per cent with an offence.

For domestic abuse cases it takes around 25 days from the first contact by the police to either a CPS decision to charge or request for further information. CPS and police have devised a joint National Action Plan that has seen adult rape referrals from police have increased 69 per cent and the number of adult rape cases charged has increased by 86 per cent since January 2021.

Section 76 Serious Crime Act 2015 (SCA 2015) created the offence of controlling or coercive behaviour in an intimate or family relationship (CCB). It can be tried summarily or on indictment and has a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment.

Immigration Initiative

The National Crime Agency is working together with social media companies to tackle the growing scourge of organised immigration crime.

A landmark agreement between the National Crime Agency and five major social media companies has led to thousands of social media posts, pages and accounts advertising the services of people smugglers being removed from the internet.

Supported by the Home Office, the agreement has seen an increase in the number of takedowns, as the NCA work with Twitter, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube to increase their understanding of how organised crime used their platforms to advertise illegal services.

Progress

It comes as representatives from the social media companies met with senior NCA officers and Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick at the Home Office to discuss the progress being made, and look at new ways forward.

The meeting heard how the since the action plan was agreed there has been positive engagement with social media channels, who have acted quickly on intelligence supplied by the NCA and removed content.

More than 3,300 posts, pages or accounts have been removed or suspended as a result, increasing disruption of organised crime groups' activity. The NCA assess that this has led the criminals to adapt their tactics to avoid detection.

Partnership

NCA Director of Threat Leadership Chris Farrimond said: "The last year has seen a strong partnership develop between ourselves and the main social media companies, with the aim of preventing organised crime groups utilising their platforms.

He said that the NCA's understanding of the issue is growing all the time, and that it now has a solid foundation which it can use to build on by working together.

'Tragically this last year has also seen a number of fatalities both in the English Channel and further afield in the Mediterranean,' he explained.

'This hammers home to us all the need to do more to stop these crime groups who treat their fellow humans as a commodity to be profited from with no regard for their safety or security.'

Working

Immigration Minister Robert Jenrick said: 'We expect social media companies to continue to work with government to take down social posts by evil people smugglers, and tackle their business model at source.'

'We have gone further by introducing an amendment to the Online Safety Bill last week to ensure tech firms take proactive steps to stop people smugglers from conducting their business on social media.'

Mr Jenrick said the Illegal Migration Bill would give immigration officers new powers to search for and seize electronic devices like mobile phones from people who come to the UK illegally, to help

collect intelligence to catch and prosecute more criminals behind these crossings.

Priorities

The NCA said that tackling organised immigration crime is one of its key priorities. It currently has more than 90 ongoing investigations into networks or individuals in the top tier of people smuggling or human trafficking – the highest number since the agency became operational nearly ten years ago.

It says that it continues to seek to disrupt the business models of these crime groups, through targeting their social media offering.

Collaboration

It says that the social media action plan was implemented to bring greater collaboration against those crime groups using social media to recruit, communicate and advertise a range of services to migrants.

It sees a greater shared understanding of the threat from organised immigration crime between social media companies and the NCA, such as through the issuing of intelligence-based alerts by the NCA, as well as a more streamlined, two-way system of communication.

Burglary Pledge

All forces will now attend every reported home burglary as part of a new pledge by the National Police Chief's Council, The Investigator reports.

A new national policy is advising all police forces in England and Wales that they should attend every home burglary, following research which looked the most effective way of tackling the burglary.

The bold move to pledge resources to attend each burglary came after research shared by the College of Policing set out how rapid police attendance at scenes can increase victim satisfaction, help with investigations, and prevent future crimes.

The NPCC and College of Policing wrote to the Home Secretary to inform her of the new standards and the decision of chiefs. The NPCC also asked for the Home Secretary to consider a review of crime recording processes. Previously, a burglary of someone's family home was treated the same as the loss of a spade from a shed. Although any case of burglary is invasive and upsetting, we asked for a better way of recording these crimes.

In response to its request, the Home Office Counting Rules for burglary have been changed to split the existing classification of residential burglary into two components - residential burglary of a home and residential burglary of unconnected building and to retain a separate sub-category to cover burglary in business and commercial properties.

This has brought greater transparency to crime recording for offences of burglary, and better reflects the way in which police forces across England and Wales prioritise their approach to such offences.

National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Burglary, Deputy Chief Constable Alex Franklin-Smith, said that although the fulfilment of this commitment is a milestone in itself, it is only the first step.

'We want to be bringing more offenders to justice,

we want to be gathering more evidence, and we want to be improving detection rates. We expect to be judged on the results the public see,' he explained.

'Burglary is an insidious crime. They do not just involve the loss of personal possessions, which in itself is very distressing, but they are also extremely invasive and can make people feel unsafe in their own homes.'

He said that the number of burglaries is at an all time-low, down more than 50 per cent over the past decade, but that police were not complacent.

‘We will continue to prioritise preventing these offences, targeting repeat offenders and organised crime groups and solving as many burglaries as we can.’

Examples of proactive work to tackle burglary

West Mercia Police

The ‘We don’t buy crime’ initiative is a collaborative community approach to tackling burglary and other acquisitive crime. Local residents in parishes signed up to the scheme are offered a SmartWater forensic property marking kit with signs displayed on main routes in and out of the town/village advising criminals the local community has taken crime prevention steps.

Northamptonshire Police

The force has launched an initiative called Operation Crook which established two dedicated burglary teams that has helped halve the number of domestic burglaries.

As part of the operation, the teams covering both the north and west of the county, sit within CID, and they ensure that every burglary victim in Northamptonshire gets a visit from the police.

West Midlands Police

The force developed a burglary prevention campaign with bespoke information leaflets for different local areas and advertising through Spotify to reach residents with key crime prevention advice.

Alongside this, ‘27 Station Road’ shows the many different ways residents can prevent

burglaries and ensure their home isn’t an easy target for burglars.

This activity has seen a reduction in burglaries across the force area.

North Yorkshire Police

A ‘Burglary Summit’ was held recently with officers and staff from departments across the force who work together to tackle burglary. The bespoke training covered detailed best practice in responding to burglaries with input from specialist teams and videos of recent burglary victims to further highlight the impact a burglary has on those affected.

Greater Manchester Police

Operation Castle is the force wide response to tackling burglaries and has helped reduce burglaries by eleven per cent during the last year. As well as enforcement activity, there is also work being done to improve crime prevention and providing bespoke advice related to each specific incident.

Surrey Police

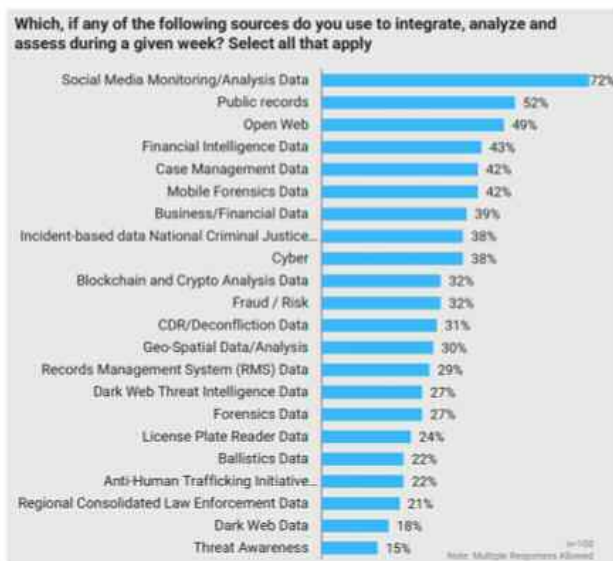
Surrey Police has launched a ‘Suspicious activity portal’ which allows local communities to quickly and easily upload CCTV, doorbell camera or dashcam footage of anything strange or out of the ordinary they might have spotted in their local area.

Lancashire Constabulary

Lancashire Constabulary runs Operation Defender, a force wide campaign funded by Lancashire’s Police and Crime Commissioner to crack down on residential burglary. Op Defender aims to locate and arrest offenders, take positive action to reduce residential burglary through crime prevention advice, and to safeguard and support victims of crime, keeping them at the heart of investigations.

7.5 sources used during any given week on average to integrate, analyze and assess.

Seven in ten use social media monitoring/analysis data during a given week.



Digital Dilemma

Research commissioned in the US by Open-Source intelligence experts Siren found that there is a serious shortage of analysts with the right technical abilities working in Federal, State and Local Law Enforcement.

Open Source Intelligence experts Siren commissioned the Government Business Council (GBC) to conduct research into the challenges faced by US law enforcement agencies when they undertake digital investigations.

The research found that 64 per cent of respondents are finding it increasingly difficult to attract employees with the right technical skills, and 42 per cent are very or extremely challenged by an excess of disparate data sources and are having difficulty in connecting those sources.

Challenges

Overall, this data shows that security concerns, timing, and data aggregation were ongoing challenges for law enforcement as new technologies and data streams emerge.

The most important part of an investigation is finding connections among suspects, gangs,

targets and accomplices in disparate data, enabling an analyst to find a lead or solve a case. Almost half of those polled experience difficulty connecting evidence across data sources or creating data linkages.

Productive

Investigative analysts need to achieve the right educational foundation and cultivate the right skill set in today's technology heavy world. More than 50 per cent of respondents state that it takes at least six months for a new analyst to become productive once onboarded thus emphasizing the importance of retention in law enforcement organisations.

As the complexity of crime increases, law enforcement must deal with an increasing number of data sources and tools in investigations. During an average week respondents analyse as many as 7.5 different sources of data, and seven in ten use social media monitoring/analysis data.

Despite that high number, given the opportunity, respondents would use an additional three sources if they had access, showing a desire for broader access to incorporate more sources in digital investigations.

Sources

In terms of more specific sources, nearly a third of those polled said they would utilise license plate reader and dark web data if available to them and nearly a quarter want to utilise dark web threat intelligence data, incident based National Criminal Justice Info Sharing Exchange, and threat awareness sources.

Despite the recent hype surrounding artificial



Bob Griffin

intelligence, those responsible for deploying AI-based solutions in law enforcement are reluctant to use it.

Accuracy

Respondents, however, did recognise the potential benefits of adopting AI to help consolidate data sources and provide visualisation tools, with the expectation that it would improve data accuracy and save money.

Bob Griffin, Chairman of Siren, said: 'The results of this report highlight what we see every day with our customers. Analysts are using an increasing number of data sources and tools to perform research and create links in their data. Unfortunately, cases are still being abandoned or taking too long to solve.'

The advertisement features a map of California with several blue location markers and connecting lines, suggesting a network or data flow. The Siren logo, a stylized 'S' in a circle, is positioned to the left of the text. The text reads: "Investigative Search" in quotes, followed by "in the Siren Platform" and the website "www.siren.io".

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