

News in focus!

Response to organised crime is 'inadequate'

The police response to organised crime is unco-ordinated and inadequate, and has been for many years, according to the Met Commissioner, Sir Paul Stephenson

Sir Paul said he had "very real concerns" about the threat of organised crime and the police service's ability to tackle it.

He said the police are currently actively targeting just 11 percent of the 6,000 known organised crime groups.

"Criminals are learning that the reach of criminal justice does not always extend that far and in many ways does not include them, and will often be restricted by artificial and self-imposed police boundaries.

"They have learnt that if they become sufficiently organised and sophisticated – and by definition they often are – then our reach is no greater than our ambition, and our ambition has been less than it should have been in recent years."

Sir Paul, who was delivering the Police Foundation's John Harris Memorial Lecture, said the public assumed organised crime was a top priority for police, but the reality is "not always, and not enough".

"Specialist resources devoted by the police service to addressing the threat from organised crime remain unco-ordinated, which is unsurprising given the continuing absence of a coherent delivery structure.

"The service currently has no organised crime strategy, no established national tasking process and no meaningful performance measures.

"Worryingly, despite the substantial growth in the police service over the past ten years, we have failed to invest in this area of policing to the extent that we needed to."

Sir Paul suggested the time had come to establish a national co-ordinator "empowered to have direction in certain defined circumstances, and oversight of the current and future regional structures."

NRG1 'legal high' joins banned list

The Home Office has confirmed that naphyrone, the 'party drug' sometimes referred to as NRG1, is to be banned and will join the list of Class B drugs.

The move follows recommendations from the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD). NRG1 is similar in make up to Meow Meow.

Minister for Crime Prevention James Brokenshire said: "I am deeply concerned about the use of this potentially dangerous 'legal high', and I want to make it illegal as soon as possible.

"We have already taken action to ban its import into the UK and we will continue to target those unscrupulous dealers who try to bring these substances onto our streets."

Naphyrone and related compounds are often sold labelled as '100 percent legal' or as 'plant food'. The ACMD report highlighted research that found that in many cases substances sold as NRG1 contained already banned drugs, such as mephedrone. The ACMD will continue to look at 'legal highs' as part of their ongoing work.

The UK Border Agency can now seize and destroy naphyrone and related compounds at the border. Following a similar ban on mephedrone in March, the UKBA has already prevented more than 115kg of suspected mephedrone reaching the street.

Sir Paul Stephenson called for a new approach to organised crime



Photography: Jeff Moore / Empics Entertainment

NRG1 is the latest so-called 'legal high' to be banned



Photography: Chris Elwell / iStockphoto