

Subject: Op Scorpion - tackling drugs criminals [#232086895]
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From: Wiltshire and Swindon Community Messaging <alert@neighbourhoodalert.co.uk>
To: Elizabeth Martin <Parish.Clerk@lynehamandbradenstoke-pc.gov.uk>



Op Scorpion - tackling drugs criminals

Three firearms, more than £33,000 worth of Class A drugs and £24,000 in illicit cash have been taken off the streets of Wiltshire as part of a regional crack-down on criminal drugs gangs.

We have been working with our colleagues in four other police forces across the South West (Avon and Somerset, Dorset, Devon and Cornwall, Gloucestershire), alongside their Offices of Police and Crime Commissioners, the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit (SWROCU) and the charity CrimeStoppers, as part of Operation Scorpion.

This is the seventh phase of Scorpion which aims to combine police resources to create a 'Ring of Steel' across the region making it an uninhabitable environment for drugs and criminal gangs.

As part of our operation we made 176 disruptions - this is where our work upsets any drug dealing activity, breaking a County Line or Lines and disrupting drug gang operations.

The week of action also included joint working with our partners British Transport Police at local railway stations and the Metropolitan Police for our drugs work.

Exploited children

During the operation we also found three children who were being exploited to run drugs as part of County Lines gangs and were missing from their homes from outside the county. They were safely returned.

In total, the operation, which ran from Monday 4 March to Sunday 10 March, achieved the following results for Wiltshire:

- **31 arrests made**
- **£24,000 cash seized**
- **Class A drugs (cocaine and heroin) valued at £33,600**
- **27 people safeguarded**
- **79 cuckooed addresses visited**
- **Weapons seized included two real guns, one imitation gun, several knives (including 100 surrendered by the public), a Samurai Sword and a set of nunchucks**
- **Numerous assets seized including a car, designer jewellery and clothing.**



One of the guns seized during Op Scorpion

Wiltshire's Police and Crime Commissioner Philip Wilkinson said: "This iteration of Operation Scorpion has seen some great outcomes as a result of well planned and executed operations by Wiltshire Police and the other four Forces across a week of intensification.

"Operation Scorpion demonstrates a border-less approach to policing to reduce the serious harm and violence caused by drugs across the whole region, as drug crime isn't just a problem in urban police areas.

"Drug crime, and the violence that usually accompanies it blights the lives of our residents and the communities they live in. By continuing to report your concerns to the police they are better placed to tackle the issues head on and take action as demonstrated by Operation Scorpion.

"I'm particularly concerned about the criminal exploitation of young people by drugs gangs and want to urge parents to not shy away from having the difficult conversations with their child if they're concerned. Parents must have open conversations with their children around County Lines, knife crime and associated criminality, and know what signs to look out for."

Last week the OPCC published a video supporting the Check Your Children campaign, set up by the charity Owen's World, which was established following the death of Owen Dunn who was fatally stabbed in Swindon in December 2022.

Making Wiltshire safer

Detective Superintendent Charlotte Tucker from Wiltshire Police said: "We are pleased with the results of this iteration of Operation Scorpion as our officers and staff managed to not only seize substantial amounts of illegal drugs and proceeds of crime like cash and assets, but also safeguarded many vulnerable people.

"We are attempting to make Wiltshire safer by taking illegal substances off the streets, arresting those who deal them as well as dismantling those criminal gangs and County Lines.

"Equally as important is the work we are doing to protect and help those vulnerable victims - often children and young adults - who are exploited to become part of these criminal networks. Our work this time has led to three children, who were from outside of our area, being returned safely to where they live.

"Safeguarding these vulnerable people is our priority along with protecting all in our communities.

"We know that those living in our towns and villages are often affected by this type of criminality which causes misery and harm to our communities.

"Our work doesn't stop at the end of this operation. We know that those who supply and distribute illegal drugs operate in a border-less way, creating complex networks of drugs lines across the region. We will continue to take a strong and robust stance against this sort of exploitative criminality.

"Our message is clear – Wiltshire and the South West is no place for drugs."

You can report information anonymously to Fearless.org, CrimeStoppers on 0800 555 111 or via their website. Alternatively, you can report concerns by calling 101 or visiting the Wiltshire Police website.



Message Sent By

Mark Jones

(Police, Communications Officer, Corporate Communications)

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