



CASE STUDY: The London Rescue & Response Project

ECINS Helps UK Rescue Vulnerable Youth from Drug Trafficking

SITUATION:

For decades, criminal organisations had made a practice of manipulating teens and young adults from London boroughs into trafficking drugs across county lines into other boroughs and remote regions. The vulnerable youths were seen as easy targets for exploitation because of insecure housing or family situations, mental health challenges, poverty and other at-risk conditions. In many cases, these children had been excluded from school or were in alternative educational programs that had become breeding grounds for exploitation.

‘Basically, if you exclude someone from school you are kind of writing them off. It’s like society saying they’ve given up on you’, said Sarah Pettengell, Director of Services for ECINS.

Criminal organisations would use these youths’ vulnerabilities and insecurities to coerce them into lives of criminal activity and violence, and the complexity of their situations was notable.

In London, these youths were viewed as ‘victims’ who were being exploited and forced into activities, such as trafficking and selling drugs. Outside London, however, these same youths were viewed

as ‘offenders’ when they crossed paths with local authorities in their drug and violence-related efforts. There was a lack of a system to both protect and support the vulnerable and deter the cycle of exploitation.

In 2015, the United Kingdom implemented the Modern Slavery Act which in part recognised that children and young people who were exploited by criminal organisations to sell and traffic drugs should legally be considered victims, not offenders. This legislation began to bring to light the thousands of children being exploited nationally, and a movement to develop an intervention for this practice arose.

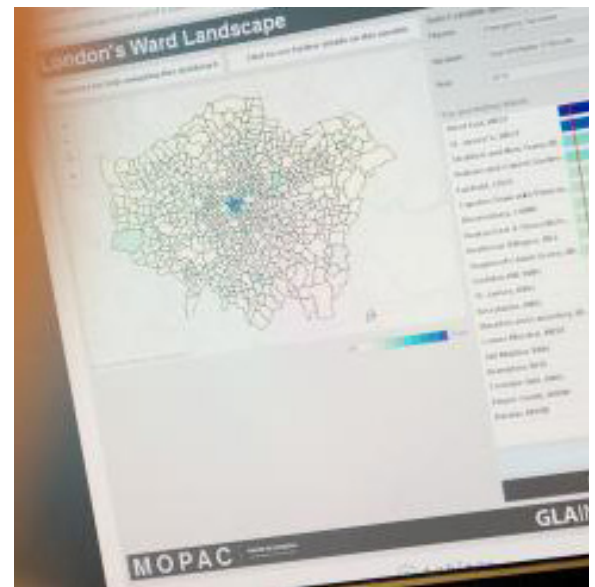


CHALLENGES:

With the youth exploitation issue at the public forefront, the local governments, police authorities, and social support organisations in the UK started to feel the pain of their biggest challenge – *a lack of consistent, streamlined information that could be shared securely across multiple agencies.*

The absence of multi-agency communication across and outside London made it impossible for police officials to connect the dots to prove a victim's identity versus their offender status, causing these youths to be treated as criminals instead of trafficking victims. And without a networked case management system in place, victims who *had* been identified were more likely to fall through the cracks, as tracking their residency and situational conditions to provide support was nearly impossible.

In addition, when a police agency attempted to rescue a victim from a criminal organisation and relocate them to safety, the victim often fell or was forced back into criminal activities when the authorities in their new location did not have enough information to help keep them protected or supported.



‘As a former frontline practitioner myself, having used four different case management systems, none have offered the opportunity to work in a multi-agency capacity with such ease as ECINS.’

Jules Trompowsky, Partnership Coordinator, Rescue & Response Project

SOLUTIONS:

In 2017, the London Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC) funded the Rescue & Response Project, a three-year initiative with the goal of helping the top 600 vulnerable youths being exploited by drug traffickers.

ECINS was brought in to develop a system that would provide a custom multi-agency solution to enable the multitude of support partners to collaborate and overcome challenges that prevented better outcomes in the past. The Reporting & Referral module was deployed to all 32 London boroughs, including police authorities, government agencies, and social support professionals. Using an encrypted master referral form as a 'One Front Door' approach, the agencies were able to securely record and share victim and 'at-risk' youth case files.

'With the ECINS system, it allows everybody in the professional network that's working around that child or vulnerable person to have access to relevant, up-to-date information', said Will Wilson, Operations Manager for the Rescue & Response Project. 'So, when a case worker has met with a young person and has an update to share, it can be updated onto the platform and then flagged up to the relevant parties. It's instantaneous.'

Dedicated partnership coordinators within the program were responsible for managing a specific set of case files in order to provide a continuity of support and advocacy for each vulnerable youth by coordinating services and treatment for each person individually, no matter their current location or needs. And with the agile, multilevel security features of ECINS as a case management tool, this quickly became a streamlined process.

The Rescue & Response team was able to execute the wraparound support needed to improve the lives and outcomes for the exploited youths, and as its efforts progressed, they envisioned the ECINS system providing them with additional capabilities.

'We still didn't know the scale of the problem', said Wilson. 'We didn't know how many of these children there were. We didn't know where they lived, their gender, their ethnicity – we didn't know the demographics associated with the problem.'

Now after three years of operations, the project has developed a detailed picture of what youth exploitation looks like, enabling an informed, more contextual response to the safeguarding of these young people.

'We are able to say now exactly which boroughs in London are experiencing higher rates of child exploitation. We can tell you which percentage are male or female, their ethnicity, what percentage of them were in education – we can break down all the demographics. We can even look at our referrals down to a small neighbourhood level.'

OUTCOMES:

With immediate savings in administrative time and cost – 700 hours saved per year – more than 600 children were assisted in the first year of the program alone, increasing the support goals to 260% more people than originally planned, all within the same original budget.

In addition, the number of collaborative teams involved in the project has increased from four to more than 40 because of the ease of use and secure information-sharing features.

And within a short amount of time, the project managers were able to collect enough data to analyse and identify hot spots of youth trafficking, and then proactively begin to develop early intervention programs and resources in those regions to support the vulnerable population and deter criminal influence.

‘In the current climate where funding has been slashed year over year for youth services in this country, we can now target the limited resources that we do have and also work with our partners and local authorities to give them the information they need to target their own resources’, said Wilson. ‘We are now working much more preventively by being able to implement early intervention in the areas that we know are likely to produce victims of exploitation in the future.’

‘We need to work more commonly in this joined up approach where our systems interlink, otherwise we’ll forever be reacting to the problem rather than preventing it.’

Will Wilson, Operations Manager, Rescue & Response Project

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CLIENT

Mayor's Office of Policing and Crime (MOPAC), London

MISSION

To rescue drug trafficked youths from criminal organisations who entrap them in their activities, as well as to proactively protect and support the vulnerable population that is a potential traffic target for these offender groups.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Criminal organisations are manipulating London borough youth into trafficking drugs across county lines
- MOPAC established a three-year funding program to assist vulnerable youths being exploited as drug traffickers
- Lack of multi-agency communication made it impossible for police officials to prove a victim's identity versus their offender status
- The ECINS Reporting & Referral module was deployed to all 32 London boroughs using an encrypted master referral form as a 'One Front Door' approach
- The Rescue & Response team now has the ability to compile and analyse data from all areas of the region and deploy assistance where needed to ensure that youths are protected from exploitation by all means available
- More than 600 children were helped and 700 hours in administration saved in the first year
- The number of collaborative teams involved in the process has increased from four to more than 40 because of the ease of use and secure information-sharing features
- Enough data has been captured to allow project managers to analyse and identify hot spots of youth trafficking, and then proactively begin to develop early intervention programs

ABOUT MOPAC & THE LONDON RESCUE & RESPONSE PROJECT

MOPAC (Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime) is the strategic oversight body that sets the direction and budget for the Metropolitan Police Service on behalf of the Mayor.

MOPAC recognised London's leading role in tackling county lines exploitation and, through London Crime Prevention Co-Commissioning Funding, funded the Rescue & Response Project. This put in place a comprehensive programme of work to better understand, target, and respond to county lines.

MAYOR OF LONDON

OFFICE FOR POLICING AND CRIME



ABOUT ECINS

Empowering Communities with Integrated Network Systems (ECINS) is a social enterprise dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable people and empowering the practitioners who serve them. A purpose-built, cloud-based, highly secure case management system, ECINS is the most widely used multi-agency collaboration tool in the U.K. and is rapidly expanding around the world. Created on the belief that when people work together they can achieve more, ECINS is capable of solving just about any case management problem that exists.

With no user licenses, ECINS is available at one simple, comprehensive cost. This includes customisation, training and support from real-world experts; access to a robust communications portal; and collaboration with a global user community that's committed to helping one another achieve better outcomes every day.

www.ecins.com



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