



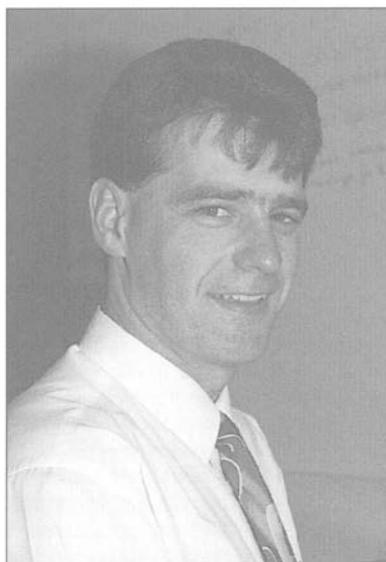
# GETTING A GRIP

## Detective Chief Inspector Simon Foy in conversation with David Kidd-Hewitt

*Can you detail the Met's strategies for dealing with those manufacturing, dealing and pushing drugs? Have there been any strategy changes in recent years?*

What we are now trying to do is to develop what has become known as the *Broome Triangle*, formulated in the late 1980s by a Chief Constable of that name. It was a simple concept that saw dealers and the drugs market as a triangular structure. At the bottom were the low level dealers, then there were the middle level dealers and at the top were the Mr Bigs - and the police service interacted at each of the different levels. The high level drugs squads were directed at the top of the triangle, the middle level squads to the middle and the divisional groups were at the bottom. That all sat very comfortably with what was regarded as the conventional structure at the time.

Now, there is a lot of debate about whether that model is still appropriate - I don't know whether it is or not. But there is a school of thought that says it does not fit comfortably any more, firstly because poly drug use is now rife, and very often there is that very unclear distinction between a dealer and a user. We, as a police service, have got to ask ourselves are we going to take out (and I use that word advisedly) those people who have the greatest impact on community safety? Now that may well mean a small bit-part dealer. He or she may be an absolute menace in terms of the local society that they terrorise and the local criminal organisation that they run. If we take them out for drugs, the impact on community safety is greater. But that person may not 'stack up' as a particularly high level dealer and likewise they may go slightly above being a low level dealer. So we have actually got to get more sophisticated. We have got to try and introduce a requirement for police at a local level to get a better grip and greater understanding of what the nature of drug abuse in their area is and more specifically those people who they can take out to the greatest effect.



Detective Chief Inspector Simon Foy

David Kidd-Hewitt

*When you 'take people out' that you know are having a significant impact on the community, do you ever feel let down because they are not taken out for very long or something happens to thwart your plans to take them out?*

Well, one of the good things that has come out of *Tackling Drugs Together*, the White Paper published just over a year ago, is that the criminal justice system per se, the CPS, the courts etc, are now on board with this. I think there is an awareness now that the problem the sentencers are dealing with needs to be addressed. So if there is a need for punitive sentences, if there is a need under the Proceeds of Crime Act to introduce financial investigations into the activities of these individuals, the judiciary are now beginning to have a greater understanding of these needs and so it's beginning to bite. My opposite number at Brixton, is quite strong on the idea that if you actually are fairly vigorous in your enforcement it is a great aid to community support. The source of the plague is a small minority of people and the vast majority of people in this community we are making safe are as anxious as we are to root them out and get rid of them. So

even in politically sensitive areas such as Brixton, there is a recognition that it is a way of actually getting good community policing.

*Do you find local people are now much more supportive of the police moving in to close down a dealer? Are you less likely to encounter any public obstruction to drugs enforcement operations?*

There is a ground swell of support, I think and this is why it is so critical that we get it right. You have to actually plot to take the right people out instead of using a broad brush, sweeping everybody up, and I think this is one of the reasons why the police service is at present slightly uncomfortable with the new arrests and disposals performance indicators.

The key performance indicators in this arena are the number of arrests and disposals we make per thousand of the population. On the one hand that is quite risky because there is almost a league table mentality developing that shows relative performances in taking people out. Certainly on the ACPO Drug Subcommittee and elsewhere, a lot of work is going on to try and produce an alternative to that. To be fair to the Home Office, they have actually said "Okay here is the key performance indicator, it is not altogether satisfactory, but suggest something different to us".

So what we are all trying to do now is to attempt to come up with something different, something better. We do not want to have just a simple arrests culture - in other words we don't want people just to be swept up willy nilly. We would feel more comfortable with the arrests that we do make being linked in some way to the principle of community safety and to our arrests being vested within an intelligence-led policing system, and to our arrests being linked to the scale of a local problem in an area. We are far more comfortable with that - but transferring that into a short, clipped meaningful performance indicator is not an easy process. At the moment there is a series of pilots running in Nottinghamshire, West Yorkshire and the South West area of the Met which are seeking to produce



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an alternative series of indicators and running them in the real world. I dare say we will refine them and knock them about a bit and reduce them down to a more manageable series. So there is a lot of work going on but it all comes back to the Government strategy expressed in *Tackling Drugs Together* - how can we perform in a way that enhances community safety?

***Do you think your strategy might have the effect of just displacing the problem?***

Whether you've displaced it, whether you've caused disruption to dealing patterns, whether you've actually made it more difficult for people who have a habit to take on drugs, whether you've actually made it more difficult for people who need to commit crime to support a drug habit, whether you've impacted in any sort of shape or form into the drugs problem is not always clear.

I think we now start from a belief that this is a problem which affects everybody. If we are going to pour resources, time and effort into actually trying to have a modern and effective drugs strategy, we've got to look very carefully at the effect we are having, whether we are doing the right thing, whether we are going after the right people, whether we are targeting resources in the right area. To do that you have actually got to try and understand the nature of drug abuse and that is probably the first thing that the police service has got to come to terms with.

***How do drug seizures by customs compare to those made by the police on the streets?***

For obvious reasons, the seizures at customs will always be much higher than seizures by the police force. But, the average member of the public wants to know and wants to see that we are all beginning to get more of a grip on the problem. Whether we stop it coming in or whether we take it off the street when it is here doesn't really matter. At the end of the day it is not here any more. It is destroyed. It is out of circulation. And we have hurt the organisations that bring it in and that's probably what is important.



Kirsty Cunningham

One other thing that I have not mentioned is that the way that this strategy has been implemented is through the creation of 105 Drug Action Teams (DATs) which cover the whole of the country. These DATs are essentially executive bodies of people who actually have the ability to change the strategic directions of the organisations of which they are members. So you now have little pockets of executive people, of which the police service is a part, sitting around together talking and doing, engaged in strategies against drugs.

***Can you tell me more about the Metropolitan Police Service's Education Strategy?***

The Met has a drugs strategy called *CrackDown* which was launched by the Commissioner last May. It was interestingly launched on the back of video we have produced for distribution to schools in London. You might think the MET would want to be launching its drugs strategy on the back of high profile drugs enforcement operations of which there are plenty in London. It chose instead to actually say, this is something that we have launched in conjunction with educationalists aimed at secondary schools in London. At the beginning of June, the Met will begin a high profile advertising campaign which will

highlight the concern about the increasing danger of drugs to young people and will encourage Londoners to 'shop a drug dealer'.

One thing that the police service are very strong on is that our role in education is not to take over. If you look at it from a pure classroom point of view our role as a police service is not to take over a teacher's message in the classroom and we are still uncomfortable with the concept of police officers delivering a total package. The ultimate objective in my view is to make sure that these kids, who will all get offered drugs at some stage in their school lives, can make an informed choice. We are having to develop our ideas and our concepts about them all the time.

We are having to develop the way that we feel is right for a particular area. What is right for my local area might not be right in a harder area of London or an inner city area of Liverpool - but is right here and that's important.

*Simon Foy, in addition to being a Divisional DCI in the Met, is also a member of the Metropolitan Police Drugs Strategy Group. He also sits as a full member of the ACPO Drugs Sub-Committee under the chairmanship of the Chief Constable of West Yorkshire, Keith Hellawell.*