Operation Pentameter was the first proactive policing operation to simultaneously involve all 55 forces in the United Kingdom. Furthermore there was cooperation and contribution from law enforcement agencies across Europe. It involved many agencies – statutory and voluntary, in this country and abroad – and enjoyed the support of both the Home Office and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Pentameter was a shining example of partnership working and shows just what can be achieved when people from a variety of disciplines work together towards a common goal.

All forms of human trafficking are abhorrent to modern-day society, but trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation is particularly heinous. It involves unimaginable levels of misery and degradation for the victims.

As Gold Commander for Pentameter, I feel privileged to have led such a complex, demanding but ultimately rewarding operation. The contribution of many individuals and organisations was vital. I place on record my gratitude to those who worked so tirelessly over many months.

Grahame Maxwell, DCC of South Yorkshire and ACPO lead on Trafficking and Organised Immigration Crime, undertook the role of Program Director for Pentameter. Acting ACC Bill Skelly, seconded from Lothian and Borders to the Metropolitan Police, was Silver Commander. The idea for a national operation to combat human trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation came from Detective Chief Superintendent Nick Kinsella, formerly of NCIS now of South Yorkshire Police.

The National Criminal Intelligence Service and latterly the Serious and Organised Crime Agency provided a dedicated Pentameter team who became the hub of the operation on a day-to-day basis. The results to date have surpassed expectation. Although the operation formally concluded on 31st May 2006, more victims are expected to be identified and further arrests will undoubtedly follow in the coming months.

The aim of Pentameter was to adopt a philosophy of ‘turning the stone’. It did exactly that, as shown by the excellent results achieved. Furthermore, it was a clear demonstration of how the British Police service can respond to the threat of increasing organised crime. However, much more remains to be done to address what in essence is nothing less than modern-day slavery. One particularly positive outcome of the Operation is the creation of the UK Human Trafficking Centre Pentameter will be subject of in-depth debrief and analysis. This document gives just a flavour of what we set out to achieve, the planning and coordination, the contributors and the results. Therefore I commend it to you.

Dr Tim Brain, spokesperson on prostitution and related vice matters

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**Pentameter’s aims included:**

- Raising national awareness of the issue of trafficking
- Identifying the scale of the problem
- Improving national and local intelligence about the organised criminal groups involved
- Recovery of victims and reduction of harm
- Asset recovery
- Making the UK a hostile environment for those involved in trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation

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**Results to date**

- **515** Premises visited
- **188** Women rescued
- **84** Women confirmed as trafficked victims
- **232** Persons arrested
- **134** Persons charged to date
Human Trafficking in the UK: A Background

For many years the UK has been a destination country for trafficked people. Trafficking can take many shapes and forms, from domestic servitude to labour exploitation to trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation. It is this last-named category that formed the basis of the work of Operation Pentameter.

Trafficking is not just a UK problem. It happens in most, if not all, European countries; some are more often used as source countries than destinations, but all are affected by it. Moreover, trafficking is not just a European issue: in the United States the new Homeland Security Department are charged with addressing it. It is a worldwide phenomenon. The US State Department estimates that up to 800,000 people per year are trafficked; the UN reports over one million people being trafficked per year.

There are several international protocols that cover trafficking, and indeed it is from one of these protocols – the Palermo Protocol – that we took the definition of trafficking used during Pentameter.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 recognised the threat of human trafficking and created specific offences of trafficking into, within and out of the UK. The maximum penalty for these offences is 14 years imprisonment.

Human trafficking was made one of the main priorities during the United Kingdom’s recent presidencies of both the EU and G8. As a consequence, the EU Human Trafficking Action Plan was implemented in December 2005. Proposals for a similar action plan here in the UK followed, including a period of consultation.

That consultation process is now complete, the summary of responses was published in June, and details of the UK Action Plan will be announced shortly.

Also, in January this year, the Home Office announced its Coordinated Prostitution Strategy, which is clear in its opposition to the attitude that prostitution is inevitable; the “oldest profession in the world”. It points out the exploitation and misery caused, and states that there is no place for such practice in our so-called civilised 21st century.

Against this backdrop, Operation Pentameter was planned.

The Victims

Operation Pentameter put a victim-focused approach at the centre of its strategic and operational planning. Representatives from the Poppy Project and CHASTE formed part of the Gold Command Group; their input influenced decisions in relation to media issues and operational practice.

A series of reactive and proactive operations has resulted in the identification of 84 victims. They originated from: Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, India, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Kosovo, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Namibia, Poland, Rwanda, Romania, Russia, Slovakia and Thailand.

The assistance of the Immigration Service was therefore critical. Language difficulties were overcome by the use of the 540 i-pods donated by the Apple Corporation.

All victims were female, the majority aged between 18 and 25. Twelve were minors aged between 14 and 17. None of them entered the country covertly, hidden in lorries for example. All entered overtly through airports, ports, railway and coach stations.

Less than 10% of the UK’s massage parlours and brothels were visited during Pentameter. It is therefore estimated that several thousand more victims remain to be found.

Operation Pentameter is the mere tip of the iceberg.
The Pentameter media subgroup harnessed media support and forged valuable links in order to bring the issue to the fore. A media launch was held in London on 21st February 2006 and this was followed by a conference for the travel industry, who were ideally placed to provide a valuable contribution.

Many initiatives followed, but particularly worthy of mention is the partnership forged with MTV Exit, a multi media campaign supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. Using MTV’s extensive media networks, such as television programming and a 14-language website, messages warning of the dangers of trafficking were delivered across Europe. There was also a sustained campaign to reduce demand for trafficked victims, which was aimed at the millions of men who attended the World Cup in Germany.

Pentameter’s timetable of progress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>June 2005</td>
<td>Planning commences - first Silver Group meeting.</td>
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<td>July 2005</td>
<td>Events of 7th July in London result in planned action being deferred.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 2005</td>
<td>Gold Group formed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 2005</td>
<td>All police forces were asked to scope their off-street prostitution, and to bid for Reflex funding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 2005</td>
<td>First of three national training days held for regional coordinators and SIOs. DCC Maxwell and ACC Skelly join Silver Command.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2006</td>
<td>Media launch and travel industry conference.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March to May 2006</td>
<td>Series of proactive and reactive operations conducted across the country.</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 2006</td>
<td>Closing conference held. UKHTC announced.</td>
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The future

The Crown Prosecution Service has provided advice and guidance throughout Operation Pentameter, both to Commanders and Senior Investigating Officers. As the Operation now moves from enforcement to prosecution, we look to our CPS colleagues to ensure that victims of trafficking receive the justice they so deserve.
Vernon Coaker, MP

Mr Coaker is the Under-Secretary of State for Policing, Security and Community Safety. The following are excerpts from Vernon Coaker’s speech at the Pentameter Conference held in London on 21st June 2006.

“I am delighted to be here today to congratulate you all on the success of Operation Pentameter and to give my personal support to driving forward the momentum that it has generated.

“Last week I visited the Poppy Project and met a young woman who had been the victim of trafficking. Her story, and some of the stories I’ve heard of the 84 women rescued from sexual slavery during Operation Pentameter are indescribably shocking.

“They remind us of the importance of Operation Pentameter and bring into sharp focus the horrific reality of those who are trafficked into the UK to be forced into sexual slavery. They also challenge us all to carry on with its work.

“I would like to congratulate all those involved – police forces, the UK Immigration Service, the Serious Organised Crime Agency, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Poppy Project, the International Organisation for Migration, CHASTE, staff at the Home Office and all of you involved in a variety of organisational and individual capacities – for the roles you have played in the preparation, planning and delivery of this operation and the work that you continue to do.

“I would also like to thank the media for all that you have done to raise the awareness of this important issue.

“In particular, I would like to say thank you to the Operation Pentameter command team who have shown great leadership in building this successful multi-agency partnership.”

UKHTC

The United Kingdom Human Trafficking Centre will spearhead the continuing fight against human trafficking in all its forms. It will be launched in autumn 2006.

It will be the first of its kind in Europe and will aim to increase knowledge and understanding of human trafficking amongst police and partner agency staff, as well as encouraging the public to come forward with information.

UKHTC Program Director
Grahame Maxwell

Links

www.acpo.police.uk
www.chaste.org.uk
www.cps.gov.uk
www.crimestoppers-uk.org
www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk
www.iom.int
www.mtv.exit.org
www.pentameter.police.uk
www.poppyproject.org
www.soca.gov.uk
www.ukhtc.org

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