

Government money to tackle organised crime 'insufficient'

Government funding for tackling serious and organised crime is by no means enough, considering its cost to the UK, according to a leading criminologist.

Serious and organised crime affects more citizens and causes more deaths in the UK each year than all other national security threats combined, the Home Office's Serious and Organised Crime Strategy published last month, said. The Home Office committed £48m for 2019-20 to tackle organised crime as part of the strategy.

But the National Crime Agency has estimated that organised crime – including fraud and money laundering, human and drug trafficking, child sexual exploitation and modern slavery – costs the UK at least £37bn a year.

Mohammed Rahman, a lecturer in criminology at Nottingham Trent University, told *Public Finance* magazine that the funding was by no means enough to effectively combat and reduce the economic cost of organised crime. A £48m budget is not going to eradicate a £37bn problem. He said the government had spent disproportionately on counter-terrorism, committing £707m last year, followed by the further £160m for 2019-20 announced in the Budget.

Rahman, who specialises in serious and organised crime, said: "Cases of organised crime are far greater than cases of terrorism in Britain, and in terms of funding should be treated equally to counter-terrorism measures.

He said the funding disparity was partly down to low public awareness of organised crime compared with terrorism, which dominates the media.

Michael Skidmore, senior researcher at the Police Foundation think-tank, agreed there was a gap in funding. "There is undoubtedly more that can be done," he said. "Cracking down on this type of crime is very resource-intensive for police, as victims are reluctant to come forward and the police have to look harder for evidence of these crimes," he said.

He added: "It is hugely challenging to do this at a time of cuts."

The NCA calculated that the cost of this type of crime has risen from £24bn in 2013 to £37bn this year, but both Skidmore and Rahman claimed this figure was too low.