



Operation Fort



Operation Fort was the largest modern slavery investigation ever conducted in the UK. West Midlands Police used Chorus to bring 13 offenders to justice and help protect 400 vulnerable people involved.



- February 2015:** First victims identified and police investigation commenced.
- June 2015:** First search of the OCG main family address leading to the recovery of a large number of bank cards and documents in other people's names, and a large sum of cash.
- September 2015:** Operation Fort team set up with an SIO, a DS, and 4 DCs including a DMI.
- October 2015:** Further search of main address that included the recovery of highly relevant phone handsets.
- July 2016:** Interim Slavery & Trafficking Risk Orders (STROs) issued by Birmingham Courts.
- October 2016:** 2 arrests made in relation to breaches of STROs.
- March 2017:** 1 conviction and sentencing for STRO breach, **the first ever in the UK** and 1 further arrest made in relation to breach of STRO.
- September 2017:** 1 further conviction for breach of STRO.
- October 2017:** Third conviction and sentencing for breach of STRO.
- April 2018:** Analysis of data in Chorus begins to build case.
- October 2018:** Trial begins.

Overview

A polish organised crime gang were running a human trafficking ring exploiting more than 400 vulnerable people that had been lured to the West Midlands. Victims were forced to work and live in appalling conditions while the gang seized identity cards, registered victims for National Insurance and opened bank accounts in the victims' names to fraudulently access money. During the investigation, new legislation was introduced in the form of Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders (STROs) which allowed West Mids Police to manage the offenders until the point of charge.



Volume of Data

4,000 exhibits including bank statements

650,000 lines of data

80 handsets

1,500 statements

40 pieces of live evidence from victims



Resources

4 Detective Constables were allocated to the investigation. Chorus Analyser was used due to the amount of data and material that was generated from the case.

Use of Chorus

Chorus was used to analyse all forms of data with results and charts used in the presentation that was completed for the judge and jury at trial. It was also used to support a number of manhunts throughout the period of the investigation.



A Single Platform

Chorus enabled all data to be uploaded into a single database, vital for links to be identified and cross referenced. This included being able to use the contact lists from handsets to help with attribution of numbers obtained in call data and being able to link nominals via saved numbers in their handsets.



Device Downloads Searching and Analysis

Case specific templates were generated that enabled handsets to be imported into Chorus once they had been translated from Polish. Text message content searches were used to quickly identify messages that contained victim's names.



Combing Data

West Mids Police were able to cross reference contact between the offenders, such as linking messages and banking transactions in a systematic way, then exporting the relevant data for the jury bundles used to take the court through the evidence. For example, Investigators were able to load bank statements into Chorus and overlay with cell site and CCTV information to show offenders using the victim's bank account. This series of events was placed into one easy to understand chart the jury could take away with them to deliberate.



Presentation of Evidence

Chorus was crucial in analytically corroborating the victim accounts and other evidence gathered. Providing the jury with a timeline of events from all of the data sources, thus enabling them to see the true and full picture.

In the first 19-week trial and the second 10-week trial, **not one disclosure issue** was put before the court.

The use of Chorus also assisted with live enquiries at court to give further evidence.

Finally, Investigators were also able to show the jury the depravity of the offenders and their complete lack of humanity by showing messages referring to the victims as "slaves" and the use of other derogatory language.

The Result

- The largest human trafficking investigation the UK has ever seen
- 13 defendants charged with a total jail time of 55 years
- Hundreds of vulnerable people saved from future harm