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# The Vital Importance of Communications Data

## *Case Studies*



# Sexual Abuse of Children: Operation GLOBE



**THE FACTS:** This was a South Wales Police investigation, in late 2012, into the sexual offences against children by Ian Watkins, lead singer of rock band, *The Lost Prophets*. The investigation went on to show that Watkins was engaged in serious sexual offences against children, including two babies belonging to two female co-defendants. In the early stages of the enquiry neither child had any physical injuries consistent with sexual abuse, there were no witnesses and no substantive evidence to support charges for the serious sexual offences that were suspected.

**THE OUTCOME:** Due to the weight of evidence, Watkins pleaded guilty and in December 2013 was sentenced to 35 years. Two co-defendants, who were mothers of babies sexually abused by Watkins, also pleaded guilty and received sentences of 17 years and 14 years. Their identities have not been revealed as the names of the child victims are protected by law and consequently so are the mothers.

## THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATIONS DATA:

Communications data showed a clear conspiracy between all three defendants to sexually abuse children.

Both babies were located and safeguarded as a result of communications data after indecent images of both were found on Watkins's devices. Investigators seized devices belonging to Watkins and recovered emails that contained indecent images of children. In one case, **Internet Protocol (IP) data** was used to identify the sender of emails containing child abuse images and quickly confirm the address of one of the co-defendants (and mother of one of the babies) who was subsequently arrested and her 16 month-old daughter taken into care.

The National Technical Assistance Team (part of GCHQ), which provides UK law enforcement and the intelligence agencies with a facility for processing complex material from seized digital media, were able to find the password set by Ian Watkins for this device. It was a clear reference to his paedophilia.

At court, the prosecution relied on evidence of phone contacts, movements and messaging between five key mobile telephone numbers. Subscriber checks had been made against these numbers to establish names and links. **Historic location data** was also used to demonstrate the movement of devices attributed to the defendants and show that they were consistent with conversations that took place between them via text, email and online.



# Child Sexual Exploitation: Operation BROOKE

**THE FACTS:** This was an Avon & Somerset Constabulary investigation into child sexual exploitation (CSE) in the Bristol area. The case involved a group of Somali men subjecting 10 girls, aged 13 – 16, to a two-year catalogue of abuse.

## THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATIONS DATA:

Communications data played a crucial role in the investigation and subsequent trials. **Call data** was used to corroborate the descriptions given by witnesses and victims. It proved there was contact between victims and suspects. It was also used to identify unknown victims and suspects (**subscriber data**) and dates offences took place. **Location data** was used to place suspects in areas relevant to the investigation.

**THE OUTCOME:** As a result of the investigation two trials went to court, resulting in convictions for 13 men for numerous charges including rape, paying for sex with a child and facilitating child prostitution. The Senior Investigating Officer concluded that without the use of communications data as an evidential source the investigation would have been severely hampered.

**IN THE PRESS:** *“One of the gang’s victims was 13 when she was raped four times by three men in one evening – first at a flat...before being driven to a city centre Premier Inn where she was raped three more times. By this stage in December 2012 she had become “used” to being abused, the court heard.*

*...the girl described how she was too terrified to scream during the attacks as other men were waiting just outside the bathroom. “I didn’t want them to know what was going on,” the teenager said.*

*Detectives first approached her after being alerted to the incident but she was too terrified to speak.”*

- [Independent.co.uk](http://Independent.co.uk)



# Serial killer: Operation DARC

**THE FACTS:** This was a Cambridgeshire Constabulary investigation into a triple murder and two attempted murders. The case began as a missing person investigation in March 2013 but soon escalated to a murder investigation after the body of Kevin Lee was found in a dyke near Peterborough. His car, which had been set alight, had previously been found in another location.

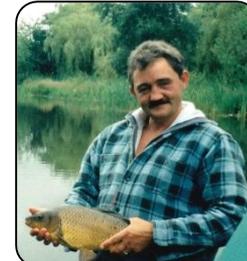
Four days later police in Hereford arrested Joanna Dennehy and Gary Stretch following two serious stabbings.

A further day later the bodies of Lukusz Slabozewski and John Chapman were discovered in a dyke near Peterborough.

**THE OUTCOME:** Joanna Dennehy, admitted three murders and two attempted murders and was sentenced to a whole life tariff in February 2014. Her accomplices, Gary Stretch, Leslie Layton and Robert Moore, were sentenced to 19, 14 and three years respectively. Without communications data, identifying and prosecuting the offenders may not have been possible.



*Killer: Joanna Dennehy*



*Victims: Lukusz Slabozewski, Kevin Lee and John Chapman*

**THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATIONS DATA:** Enquiries revealed the victims to be known associates of Joanna Dennehy. Communications data was used extensively in the investigation and as key evidence against the offenders in court.

**Call data** linked Dennehy to victims, Lee and Slabozewski, and showed that she was the last contact of both. **Location data** placed Dennehy both in the area where Kevin Lee's body was discovered and the area where his car had been set on fire. **Location and call data** showed that Dennehy and an accomplice, Gary Stretch, met Lee and Slabozewski around the scene of their murders. This data was also used to show that the mobile phone of the third victim, John Chapman, had been taken and used by Dennehy after his murder. **Subscriber data** was also used to attribute mobile phones to the offenders.

# Murder of 14 year-old boy: Operation MONTREAL



**THE FACTS:** This was a 2015 Cumbria constabulary investigation into the murder of a 14-year old boy, Jordan Watson (left), in a Carlisle cemetery. Initially there were no suspects or motive for the attack. Communications data was pivotal in the identification of the three perpetrators.

## IN THE PRESS:

*George Thomson, 19, Brahn Finley, 19, and Daniel Johnston, 20, lured Jordan Watson to Upperby Cemetery in the city, where he was stabbed to death. Pictured below, they took a selfie of themselves shortly before the pre-meditated attack.*

*Thomson...had an "obsessive desire" for Jordan's 14-year-old girlfriend.*

*- Guardian.co.uk*

## THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATIONS DATA:

**Subscriber information, call data records and location data** was obtained for the deceased's mobile phone. The resulting data identified telephone numbers the victim had been in contact with in the hours leading up to his murder. **Internet communications data** showed a connection from the deceased's mobile phone to the social media account of one suspect.

**Call data** records from that suspect's mobile phone led to the identification of two other suspects and demonstrated the numerous contacts made between them before and after the murder.

**Location data** on the mobiles of the suspects placed them in the area of the murder scene at the relevant time.

The communication data gathered was used to disprove the suspects' accounts given in police interviews.



**THE OUTCOME:** All three were convicted of murder and sentenced to between 10 and 27 years imprisonment. Communications data evidence played a significant part in the prosecution case and its value was commented upon by the trial Judge.

# High-value theft: Operation GRIFFIN

**THE FACTS:** In April 2012 a police investigation commenced into the theft of two Chinese artefacts from Durham University Oriental Museum. A week later 18 pieces of very high-value artefacts were stolen from the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

Two suspects arrested for the Durham theft led investigators to link the crime to a wider network that was responsible for similar thefts from locations across the UK. Investigators went on to establish that an **international organised crime group** had undertaken a series of high-value thefts of artefacts worth £57million.



A jade bowl and porcelain figurine were taken in the Durham raid



Chinese artefacts worth up to £15m were stolen from Cambridge's Fitzwilliam Museum in April 2012



## IN THE PRESS:

Det Supt Adrian Green was asked to head up the team which went from a fledgling investigation to the point where 26 forces carried out 40 co-ordinated raids at locations across England and Ireland in September 2013, resulting in dozens of arrests.

*"It's just really hard work, in that you've got some names and intelligence and a whole raft of telephone numbers, but you don't know who the users are," Mr Green said. Then you put a load of work in to link the telephones to different people. They're also to-ing and fro-ing between the European mainland and Ireland - it really is hard graft."*

**THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATIONS DATA:** Communications data, some of which was acquired for **the full 12 month retention period**, was essential in identifying those involved in the conspiracy. **Incoming and outgoing call data** and **subscriber data** was used to identify further subjects and phone numbers of interest. **Location data** assisted in placing subjects at locations relevant to the investigation.

**THE OUTCOME:** The prosecution used communications data as evidence in court. As a result, 14 men from across England and Northern Ireland were convicted for conspiracy to steal. They were sentenced to between 15 months and seven years imprisonment. Without communications data many of the offenders would not have been identified or brought to trial. The operation recovered £16million of stolen property and £300,000 cash.



# Drug trafficking

**THE FACTS:** This was an Metropolitan Police serious organised crime operation targeting high-value drug trafficking. High-purity cocaine was entering the UK, and south-east London-based facilitators of Albanian origin were organising delivery of the drugs via designated couriers to purchasers based in the Kent area.

**THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATIONS DATA:** Seven people were charged after being identified through the **call data** of other defendants previously charged. The communications data, alongside other evidence, left four of these defendants no choice but to plead guilty.

The defendants were identified through the mobile phones seized from other defendants. The **call data** allowed the police to attribute the handsets/SIMS never recovered to two customers in the conspiracy. **Location data** showed them to be in the area where one of the offences had taken place. The detailed call data presented to the jury in a three week trial played a significant part of the defendants being found guilty. **All of the communications data requested was more than four months-old when it requested.**

**THE OUTCOME:** Six of the defendants were convicted in August 2017 of being concerned in the supply of class A drugs or conspiracy to supply Class A drugs, and received custodial sentences of four to nine years each. One defendant was found not guilty. In total 4kg of cocaine, with a purity between 87 – 90%, was seized. This was estimated to have a street value of between £159K - £397K.

# Money laundering

**THE FACTS:** This was a drugs and money laundering operation involving the seizure of 165kgs of heroin in the UK and removal of significant amounts of cash and assets from the criminals. The street value of the heroin at the time of recovery was **over £3m.**



**THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATIONS DATA:** The spine of the prosecution case was **location data** and its analysis. The defendants collectively had ownership of over 100 phones. The group's tactic was to use many SIMs in basic cheap handsets and change them frequently, and in a co-ordinated manner. The use of communications data was the most significant operational tool to secure the prosecutions.

**THE OUTCOME:** Over the separate trials, eight defendants were convicted, with sentences totalling nearly 140 years, including an “iconic untouchable” in the Midlands area. The acquisition of communications data to support the intelligence picture was key to the success of operations



# Aggravated Burglary

**THE FACTS:** Two men burgled a home in Kensington, threatening the occupants, two women, with a gun and knife, and tying both up with cable ties to facilitate the burglary. Two suspects were identified.



**THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATIONS DATA:** The suspects offered a defence of prior contact and a pre-arranged meeting with the victims. In order to disprove this defence, **call data** records (incoming and outgoing) were sought as well as **location data** showing where the suspects were at the relevant times. The incoming and outgoing calls records showed there was no prior contact with the victims, disproving their defence. The location data records also placed the suspects in the vicinity of the offence. The defendants were found guilty.

# Violent Robbery

**THE FACTS:** An elderly couple were subjected to a violent robbery, during which cash and property, including one of the victim's mobile phones, were stolen.



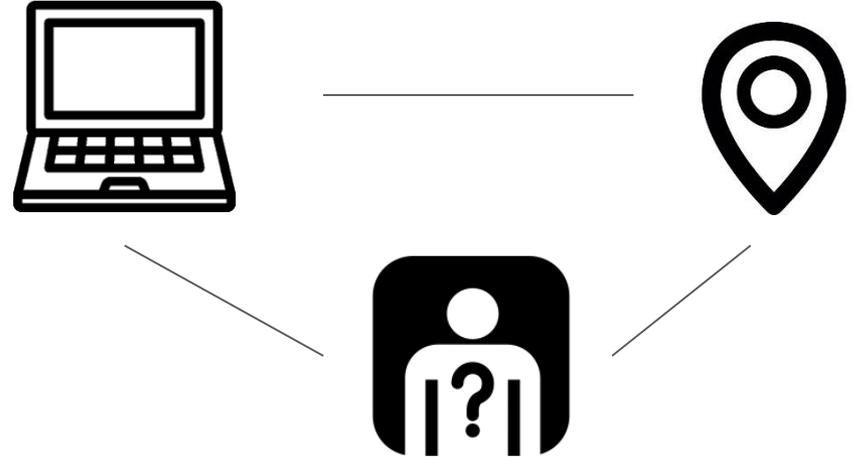
## THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATIONS DATA:

Communications data identified that a foreign SIM card had been put into the stolen phone after the robbery. Outgoing **call data** identified a telephone number belonging to a hostel where the suspect was finally arrested. **Location data** for the mobile also put the suspect in the vicinity of the offence 15 minutes before it occurred.

Communications data was instrumental in the detection of this crime. Without it, the suspect would not have been identified. This evidence was so overwhelming that the suspect admitted the offence at interview and received a 10.5 year prison sentence.

# Suicidal missing person

**THE FACTS:** Surrey Police received a report from American authorities regarding a male who had been using a US Army Veterans chat room. Surrey Police were provided with only the first name of the individual who stated he had taken an overdose.



## THE VALUE OF COMMUNICATIONS DATA:

The **IP address** used at the time of 'log in' was provided by the US authorities as well as map references for the IP address, which resolved to a large residential area in Surrey.

Exact timing of the on-line activity was requested by Surrey Police from the US authorities which confirmed a six minute period of activity from the IP address, which ended 38 minutes before the US authorities contacted Surrey Police.

Within less than two hours from the notification from the US, Surrey Police, via the relevant Internet Service Provider, **resolved the IP address** to a physical address with **subscriber details**.

The address was in another force area but it enabled Surrey to contact the relevant force and share the details of the individual concerned.

**THE OUTCOME:** As a result, local officers forced entry to the identified address, where they found the individual concerned had indeed taken an overdose. They were able to secure his transfer to a local hospital to render lifesaving treatment.

**Without communication data there would not have been any other options available to identify the location of the individual concerned and it is highly likely he would not have survived.**