

LONDONERS' LIVES MATTER

REVERSING THE RISE IN
KNIFE CRIME

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Knife crime is on the rise in London. From 2011 to 2015, the number of knife crimes fell 32 per cent. Sadly, over the past two years, the direction has reversed, with knife crime rising by 43.62 per cent over this mayoralty. Tragically, knife crime is most commonly perpetrated by and against vulnerable young people, with BAME Londoners being highly over-represented amongst the victims.

In response, in June 2017, the Mayor and his team launched a Knife Crime Strategy. By launching the strategy, the Mayor clearly acknowledges that there is a problem. However, as a strategy, it is insufficient to meet the challenge that London is now facing. Violent crime is on the rise in the Capital and, tragically, it seems to be driven by an ongoing behavioural shift in young people. The Mayor's strategy lays a basic foundation, but it does not deliver the community engagement, joined-up working and long-term violence prevention that young Londoners need. Without a systematic intervention that targets the forces driving the increase in violence, we will only suppress the symptoms of knife crime rather than the causes.

This report provides an overview of the evidence around violence prevention, breaks down the Mayor's Knife Crime Strategy, and proposes recommendations that could form the core of a greatly improved knife crime prevention strategy.

The key findings of the evidence review are: that only one in five knife crimes resulted in a prosecution in 2016, primarily because some young people and certain communities had reservations about working with the police; the most successful approach to dealing with violence is from a public-health perspective; and children and young people are primarily carrying knives for protection.

The Mayor's Knife Crime Strategy has so far failed to have any measurable impact on knife crime. There are numerous flaws in the strategy, mainly:

- The report mentions 'A multi-agency partnership approach', but there is little detail on what the Mayor will do within the strategy. He mainly passes responsibility to organisations that the Mayor has little or no influence over;

- The report lacks vision – there are few, if any, innovative ideas in the strategy. The recommendations that incorporate ideas used elsewhere in policing and emerging thinking around new technology;
- It lacks any tangible timescales and has no proper review mechanism or key performance indicators;
- The Mayor's main way of responding to knife crime killings is to re-use previous press releases and announcements;
- The strategy reads as a wish list, rather than a well-thought out plan or strategy.

Reducing knife crime is something that I am passionate about. The victims of knife crimes are more than just a statistic, they are human beings with dreams, aspirations and potential; they have families, friends and people who love and will miss them.

This report puts forward 9 recommendations directed at the Mayor and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC). These recommendations are summarised below:

1. Refocus stop and search mainly to target knife crime.

Timeframe: Short-term

Young black and other minority ethnicities (BAME) are less trusting of the police than the wider public, and stop and search has been identified as one of the reasons for this. Looking at the statistics on stop and search one can see why. Only 15 per cent of stop and searches relate to knife crime, compared with 60 per cent relating to drugs. The most recent Crime Survey of England and Wales shows that drug usage among white people is almost twice that of black people. Yet young black males are over ten times more likely than white males to be arrested for drug offences. This erodes community trust and underpins suspicions that the black community is disproportionately targeted for drug offences. Stop and search should be refocused on knife crime so that the overall proportion of all searches significantly increases, which would bring about greater trust in this vital tool.

2. Develop a long-term (5-10 year) youth violence prevention strategy for London.

Timeframe: Long-term

This report argues that London needs a long-term violence prevention strategy. Knife crime is a symptom of broader violence-inducing factors, and without long-term planning the impact of the Mayor's interventions will not extend beyond the bounds of his mayoralty. The current Knife Crime Strategy reads as a wish list on what the Mayor wants partners and other organisations to do to reduce knife crime. Develop a long-term (5-10 year) youth violence prevention strategy for London, to ensure that the children of London are properly safeguarded. The strategy should include actions being taken on knife crime and wider violent crime, a plan to monitor outcomes and a mechanism to review the progress being made. This should include key performance indicators (KPIs) and an annual report to the Police and Crime Committee.

3. Increase the use of intelligence gathering through social media.

Timeframe: Short-term

Social media has been identified as a catalyst for knife crime and other violent behaviour. Gathering intelligence from social media will allow the police to identify those likely to be involved in such behaviour and take appropriate action. For example, there is a group called WoodGrange E7 that is known to post such content to YouTube.

4. Pilot a new referral programme based on the Government's CONTEST Strategy and use Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) as an example on how to manage this.

Timeframe: Medium-term

The counter-radicalisation programme known as CONTEST has been successful in preventing vulnerable individuals from engaging in acts of extremism by taking referrals of those at risk and, when needed, helping them. It has prevented 150 people (including 50 children) from travelling to Syria. Scotland's VRU is a good example of this. However, given the nature of knife crime, this new referral programme should have a greater level of community leadership than the VRU and CONTEST, with parents and grandparents playing a role. There should be community representation at the leadership level and existing mentoring schemes should be incorporated into this programme to help those most at risk. There are potentially two funding sources for this recommendation. Firstly, this would be an ideal initiative for the Mayor to use his recently announced and, as yet, unallocated £15 million fund to tackle knife crime. Secondly, as young adults are one of the key targets of this recommendation,

the Mayor could also use the Skills and Adult Education Devolved Budget that is due in 2019.

5. Run targeted advertising campaigns. These are divided into two recommendations, one to target those at risk of committing knife crime and one aimed at parents and other family members.

Timeframe: Short-term

5.1: Produce an advertising campaign aimed at parents, grandparents and community elders encouraging them to speak to their children about criminality. This could include leaflets and posters at GP offices, hospitals, on public transport and in job centres. These can give advice on what to look for, what they can say and how to help those at risk of engaging in violent behaviour. Such an approach has worked well with other crimes such as drink-driving.

5.2: Run a hard-hitting social media campaign. Use hard-hitting messaging, images, videos and stories to deter young people from carrying knives. This could include interviews with family members of victims of knife crime and those who have spent time in prison and now regret their actions. This should be reinforced with positive messaging, such as stories of former offenders who have changed their lives for the better.

6: Ensure that there are good quality community and agency-led initiatives that support young people gaining skills and employment opportunities in order to reduce violent crime.

Timeframe: Medium-term

An excellent example of this is the Firebreak Scheme in Essex. The scheme, run by Essex Fire Service, takes young people who have been identified as engaging in risky behaviour and then trains them as young firefighters. This helps develop the skills and understanding necessary for the students' development as active and responsible citizens. The Mayor should launch a similar scheme for the London Fire Brigade. This is inexpensive, with each course costing £4,000, meaning a pilot in each borough would cost £128,000. Another good example is multi-systemic therapy (MST), which provides trained therapists to work with youth at risk of out-of-home placement (care or custody) due to offending or severe behavioral issues over three to five months. This can be funded from the Skills and Adult Education Devolved Budget.

7: Pilot new AI technologies to aid policing. Technology is changing all the time and too often the Metropolitan Police Service are late embracers of such change. There are two ways in which the MPS could utilise greater use of technology to aid in this regard:

Timeframe: Long-term

7.1: Smart CCTV - CCTV has long been a crime fighting tool, but is only called upon once a serious crime has been committed. Emerging artificial intelligence technology can be used to aid the fight against crime by detecting it as it takes place. Algorithms now exist that can monitor CCTV and look for suspicious and criminal behaviour. This can also be used to identify objects, therefore can be used to detect knives when shown in a public place. Smart CCTV will help in times of tight budgets as it can free police officers and staff from searching through video footage for evidence. This can also detect crime that may otherwise go unreported or get reported when the perpetrators have left the scene.

7.2: AI Assisted Decision Making - Durham Constabulary has tested technology to determine whether a suspect is at a low, medium or high risk of offending once they are released from custody. This will help reduce harm to the public by helping police officers make more informed decisions on the risk an individual poses to public safety. While this is for all general crime, those committing knife-related offences often have had previous contact with law enforcement.

8: Introduce a scheme for businesses to allow the police to access live streams of external surveillance cameras to improve detection and prosecution rates.

Timeframe-Medium-term

The Mayor could launch a voluntary scheme to allow the Met to access the external cameras of businesses that are using a streaming-based system. This would provide the police control operator with more accurate information in real time and allow for a better assessment to be made to determine what action should be taken.

INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of knife crime in London is a stain on our city and, according to figures from the Metropolitan Police Service, the problem is getting worse. Tragically, knife crime is most commonly perpetrated by and against vulnerable young people, with BAME Londoners being highly over-represented amongst the victims. It is imperative that we intercede with affected communities to break the cycle of violence. The Mayor's Knife Crime Strategy is a step in the right decision, but it does not deliver enough in terms of long-term prevention. This report urges the Mayor to take a longer-term approach to ensure the enduring safety of our young people.

The report will review the current state of knife crime in London, explore prevention best practices, summarise and evaluate the Mayor's Strategy, and propose three core components for violence prevention, building the case for a long-term violence prevention strategy for London.

SECTION 1: KNIFE CRIME – PREVALENCE AND CAUSES

According to Metropolitan Police figures, knife crime is on the rise in London. From 2011/12 to 2014-15, knife crime was in a state of gradual decline, dropping from 14,171 incidents to 9,691. Unfortunately, this trend has taken a turn for the worse, with knife crime rising slightly in 2015/16, and then jumping up almost 25 per cent in 2016/17 to 12,122 incidents (an increase of 2,379).¹ Possession offences have risen by nearly the same proportion, from approximately 3,000 to 4,000 incidents.²

Whether the problem is best addressed with a 'knife crime' strategy is an issue that is perhaps in need of further consideration. There is a dearth of evidence that developing strategies around specific weapons is more effective than other approaches such as focusing on youth violence. The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, for example, noted that "there is... a need to recognise that trends in any form of

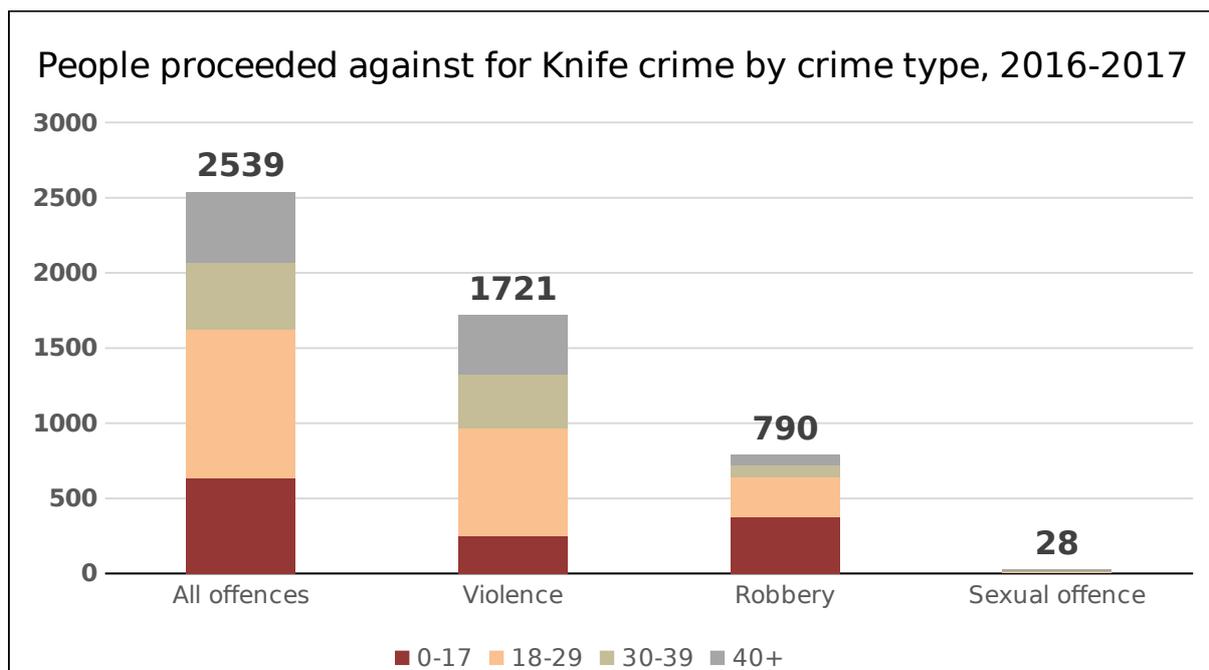
¹The London Knife Crime Strategy, Greater London Authority, June 2017, p11:
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mopac_knife_crime_strategy_june_2017.pdf

²The London Knife Crime Strategy, Greater London Authority, June 2017, p13:
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mopac_knife_crime_strategy_june_2017.pdf

violence, particularly ‘knife crime’, are not determined by criminal justice responses, but are related to underlying social and economic developments”.³ One report noted “Focusing on the weapons themselves may [be] something of a distraction”.⁴ However, as there has recently been a public outcry regarding knife crime, at least the Mayor’s strategy makes it clear that he recognises the problem. I do, however, have concerns about his ability to enact solutions.

Who is involved in Knife Crime and why?

It is a tragic fact that a significant portion of knife crime is perpetrated by and against young people, particularly those of Black, Asian, and minority ethnicities (BAME). According to statistics from the MPS, approximately 25 per cent of the 2,539 people proceeded against for knife crime and 25 per cent of the 13,000 knife crime victims were under 18 in 2016/17. The three largest groups of offenders proceeded against are 18-29 and 30-39 year olds who have committed violence against persons, and 0-17 year olds who have committed robbery. Taken together, these groups account for 57 per cent of the 2,539 people proceeded against in 2016/17.⁵



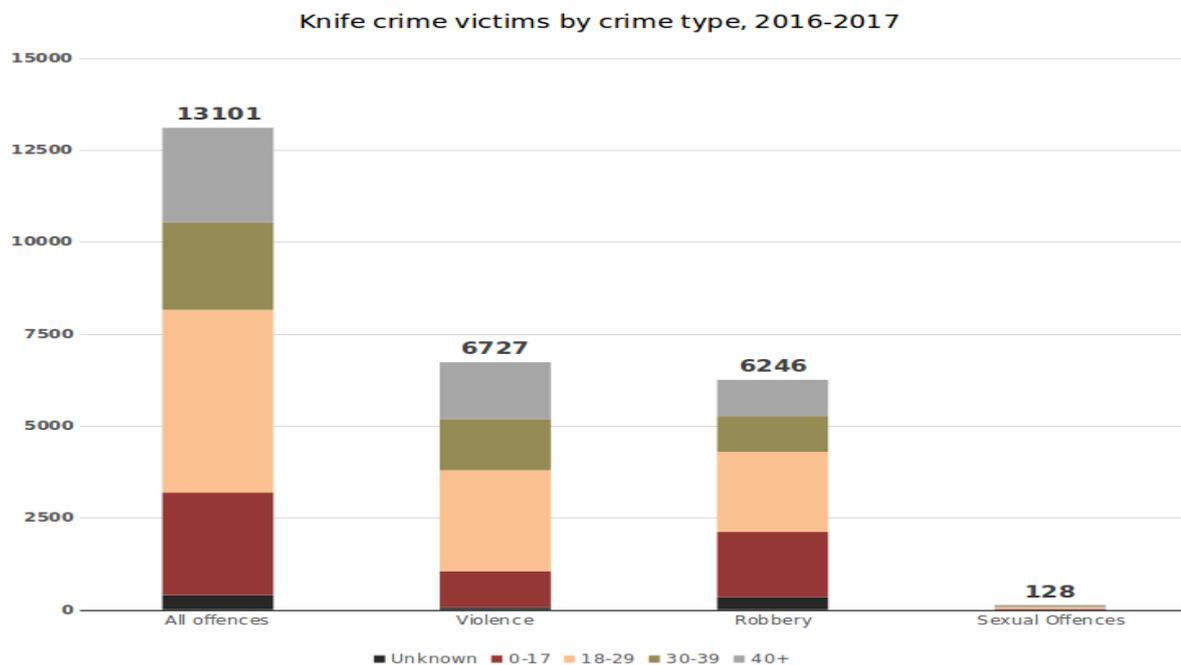
³‘Knife Crime’: A Review of Evidence and Policy, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, December 2007, p30: http://www.kiyan.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/ccjs_knife_report.pdf

⁴Young people, and gun and knife crime: a review of the evidence, 11 Million, March 2009, p7: http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/9506/1/force_download.php%3Ffp%3D%252Fclient_assets%252Fcp%252Fpublication%252F353%252Fgun_and_knife_crime_lit_review.pdf

⁵Freedom of Information Report 2017090000781, Metropolitan Police Service, November 2017

Further, according to statistics from the Strategy, almost 50 per cent of young victims “were of black ethnicity,” and half of those accused of knife crime with injury were described as “black males aged under 25”.⁶

Of the 25 per cent increase in victims in 2016/17 (almost 2,400 individuals), 58 per cent of the increase (1,501) of the victims were under 30, and over half of those victims (965) were either under 18s who were victims of robbery or 18-29 year olds who were victims of violence. The two highest volume victim groups have remained 18-29 year olds victims of violent crime and 0-29 year olds victims of robbery which, together, account for over 50 per cent of all victims.⁷ These statistics should be treated with caution however, given the evidence that knife crime victims are often reluctant to communicate or work with the police, an issue that will be expanded on below.



⁶The London Knife Crime Strategy, Greater London Authority, June 2017, p25:
https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mopac_knife_crime_strategy_june_2017.pdf

⁷Freedom of Information Report 2017090000781, Metropolitan Police Service, November 2017

The majority of youths who admit to carrying knives say that they do so to protect themselves.^{8,9} A 2004 Youth Justice Board survey found that children were considerably more likely to have carried a knife if they had been victims of crime (36 per cent vs 18 for non-excluded children, 62 per cent vs 51 for excluded children).¹⁰ Other oft-cited reasons for carrying knives include media coverage and status.¹¹

There are few knife and knife-carrying offences in schools, though both have been rising over the past couple of years. Knife carrying has risen from 203 in 2014 to 299 in 2016, and knife crime offences have risen from 67 to 85 over the same period.¹²

Interestingly, gang violence is a small contributor to London knife crime, accounting for only 5 per cent of knife crime with injury according to the Knife Crime Strategy.¹³

Since the publication of the 2016/17 knife figures that were used above, the numbers have continued to rise and are likely to be higher in 2017/18 period. From December 2016 to November 2017, there were 14,348 knife crime incidents, representing an increase of 31.26 per cent from the year before and a two-year increase of 43.62 per cent.¹⁴

Proceedings and Trust

The small number of people proceeded against is concerning, with approximately one case proceeding to court per five knife crime incidents in 2016/17. The number of people proceeded against for knife crime has dropped 15 per cent from 2012/13 to 2016/17.¹⁵ A key factor seems to be a lack of trust in the police. In a November 2017 Greater London Assembly Police and Crime Committee meeting, MPS Assistant Commissioner Martin Hewitt stated that “many

8‘Knife Crime’: A Review of Evidence and Policy, Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, December 2007, p13: http://www.kiyan.org/newsite/wp-content/uploads/ccjs_knife_report.pdf

9Youth Survey 2009, Youth Justice Board, 2010, p16: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/4152391.pdf>

10Youth Survey 2009, Youth Justice Board, 2010, p16: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/4152391.pdf>

11‘Knife Crime’ Seventh report of the session 2008-2009, Home Affairs Committee, May 2009, p28-30: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/112/112i.pdf>

12Freedom of Information report, Metropolitan Police Service, March 2017: https://www.met.police.uk/globalassets/foi-media/disclosure_2017/march_2017/information-rights-unit---knife-crime-and-or-knife-possession-offences-in-schools-in-the-last-three-calendar-years

13The London Knife Crime Strategy, Greater London Authority, June 2017, p15: https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/mopac_knife_crime_strategy_june_2017.pdf

14<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/mopac-performance-framework>

15Freedom of Information Report 2017090000781, Metropolitan Police Service, November 2017

victims are entirely unwilling to engage with police... the victims often tell us they're not even prepared to provide a statement to us."¹⁶

There appears to be a lack of trust between BAME young people and a lack of faith that the police are able to keep them safe. This lack of engagement is problematic because it undermines police enforcement efforts and means that young people are turning elsewhere for protection (knives).

Based on the material reviewed, victims and witnesses of knife crime perpetrated by youths will often know the perpetrator, and risk retaliation from both the perpetrator and his/her allies if the police are brought into the picture.

Furthermore, victims may also have been injured while involved in illegal activities, further undermining their willingness to involve law enforcement. Another issue identified by Duwayne Brooks¹² is that some victims and witnesses, mainly within the BAME group, do not trust the police, believing them to be more interested in searching for drugs than in ensuring their safety. As you will see in the next five paragraphs, there is evidence to support this claim.

The majority of stop-and-searches in London are for drugs, with only a minority of searches being for weapons (from December 2016 to November 2017, 60 per cent of stop and searches were for drugs, 15 per cent were for knives¹⁷). Mr Brooks argues that drug searches foster an oppositional dynamic between youth and officers and, without taking any stance on drug policy, proposes that it would improve relations with at-risk youth if they saw that officers were focusing on searching for knives.¹²

The well-respected Lammy Report, to which the author contributed, states that black boys are over ten times more likely than white boys to be arrested for drug offences.¹⁸ Yet, according the Crime Survey of England and Wales, the proportion of white 16 to 59 year olds reporting use of drugs in 2016/17 was 9 per cent, almost double that of black 16-59 year olds, for which the figure is 4.7 per cent.¹⁹

¹⁶Police and Crime Committee Meeting, Greater London Authority, 15 November 2017, p21

¹⁷Stop-and-search dashboard, Metropolitan Police, accessed December 22, 2017: <https://www.met.police.uk/stats-and-data/stop-and-search-dashboard/>

¹⁸https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf pg 21

David Lammy later said on the matter of drug searches: “As we speak, there will be a young, white, middle-class man smoking a joint with impunity at a campus university, and the police will be nowhere in sight. But a young black or Muslim man walking through Brixton or on Tottenham High Road will be stopped and searched, and end up with a criminal record that blights their life chances for ever.”²⁰

The recent changes to stop and search had a negative impact on the proportion of black people being searched. Previously they were six times more likely to be searched than a white person,²¹ they are now eight times more likely.²²

Recommendation 1: Refocus stop and search mainly to target knife crime.

Young black and other minority ethnicities (BAME) are less trusting of the police than the wider public, and stop and search has been identified as one of the reasons for this. Looking at the statistics on stop and search one can see why. Only 15 per cent of stop and searches relate to knife crime, compared with 60 per cent relating to drugs. The most recent Crime Survey of England and Wales shows that drug usage among white people is almost twice that of black people. Yet young black males are over ten times more likely than white males to be arrested for drug offences. This erodes community trust and underpins suspicions that the black community is disproportionately targeted for drug offences. Stop and search should be refocused on knife crime so that the overall proportion of all searches significantly increases, which would bring about greater trust in this vital tool.

A related issue that has already been raised is how victims and witnesses do not feel they can count on the police for protection

19https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjm3vGGpNzYAhULDMAKHUzdCEIQFggpMAA&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fuploads%2Fsystem%2Fuploads%2Fattachment_data%2Ffile%2F633263%2Fdrug-misuse-1617-tables.xlsx&usg=AOvVaw23aCoKk0k6hs3SjCzTt2R table 3.01

20<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2018/jan/14/david-lammy-criticises-sadiq-khan-over-vow-to-increase-stop-and-search>

21https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf pg 20

22<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2017/oct/26/stop-and-search-eight-times-more-likely-to-target-black-people>

for fear of retaliation, and potentially take up knives themselves as an alternative path to safety. This is also a complicated problem: some victims and witnesses will not want to work with the police because they themselves were involved in illegal activity. The police should ensure that youths who fear retaliation have opportunities to safely and anonymously seek advice from the police and, in the case of a prosecution, that they receive the protection that they need and deserve.

Key Risk Factors

What factors can help predict whether an individual will become involved in violence? It is important to note that risk factors change with age. For example, anti-social friends are a very strong predictor of future violent and offending behaviour for 12-14 year olds, but are a very weak predictor for 6-11 year olds.²³ Risk factors are also much more useful for predicting future offending in general than for predicting specific types of offending.

Keeping these caveats in mind, the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies' 11 Million report extracted the key risk factors from two meta-analyses. Some of the key risk factors pertaining to individual characteristics included being male, and being emotionally unstable. The report thematically categorized other key risk factors as follows:

Family

Examples of family risk factors that were found to be predictive included having a poor relationship with parents, conflict or behaviour management problems between parents and the child, having parents who participated in or encouraged anti-social behaviour, and coming from a broken home.

School

Anti-social behaviour in school and poor academic performance were both risk factors.

Rebelliousness

Exposure to and early participation in anti-social behaviour and crime was a notable risk factor, particularly for pre-teens as noted above.

²³Young people, and gun and knife crime: a review of the evidence, 11 Million, March 2009, p21:
http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/9506/1/force_download.php%3Ffp%3D%252Fclient_assets%252Fcp%252Fpublication%252F353%252Fgun_and_knife_crime_lit_review.pdf

Community

The relationship between community, economic status, and crime is noted as particularly difficult to disentangle. Economic deprivation is a notable risk factor, but correlation and causality is difficult to establish.²⁴

Social Media

Social media has been identified as a catalyst for knife crime and other violent behaviour.²⁵ I will explore social media further later in this report.

The complexity of community and economic status warrants further exploration. Areas with 'higher levels of social disadvantage' (e.g. areas with high unemployment, low-quality housing, poor rates of educational achievement, etc) tend to have higher levels of recorded crime.²⁶ However, it does not directly follow from this that poverty causes crime because poverty and deprivation themselves not just in the state of individuals' bank accounts, but also as a variety of individual and community problems such as drugs, depression, exposure to violence, and erosion of community trust. Caution should therefore be used when attempting to treat individual factors in this category, given the potential for unintended consequences and mistaking correlation for causation.

A 2011 report by The World Bank called 'Violence in the City' explored the relationship between communities and violence in greater depth. This report concluded that "a sense of social connection is one of the most important protective factors against violent behaviour. When urban residents feel connected to one another, whether directly through personal ties or more broadly through shared values, they are less likely to engage in violence."

This report, in line with the Preventative Criminal Justice in Glasgow research above, emphasises the importance of family and community interventions. It also emphasises the importance of building trust and connections within communities, between communities and broader public

²⁴Young people, and gun and knife crime: a review of the evidence, 11 Million, March 2009, p20:
http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/9506/1/force_download.php%3Ffp%3D%252Fclient_assets%252Fcp%252Fpublication%252F353%252Fgun_and_knife_crime_lit_review.pdf

²⁵<https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/how-londons-knife-culture-is-being-fueled-by-jargon-social-media-and-music-a3579396.html>

²⁶Young people, and gun and knife crime: a review of the evidence, 11 Million, March 2009, p26-33:
http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/9506/1/force_download.php%3Ffp%3D%252Fclient_assets%252Fcp%252Fpublication%252F353%252Fgun_and_knife_crime_lit_review.pdf

services. Building relations between generations was also found to be important because it could mend the rift that often develops in different age groups. The World Bank report emphasises the importance of community policing, particularly for increasing community members' sense of security. The importance of cultivating relationships between local communities, services, and different levels of government is also emphasised.²⁷

Summary and Analysis

According to surveys, young people are less trusting of the police than older generations, and black and other minority ethnicities (BAME) are less trusting of the police than the wider public.²⁸ It is therefore probable that knife crime is even more prevalent in these groups than the above figures suggest. There are substantially more recordings of under-18 robbers and robbery victims than there are of injury incidents, but these figures should not be relied on too heavily, given the probability that this age-group severely under-reports both. It remains probable that 18-30 year olds still commit the majority of knife crime with injury, and that under-18s commit a greater proportion of robbery than 18-30 year olds.

The fact that victims are unwilling to work with police aligns with The World Bank's analysis that violence propagates in low-trust environments which are poorly integrated with wider social institutions. The fact that the Knife Crime Strategy does not notably address the issue of trust therefore seems like a significant oversight.

The key areas for early intervention are families, schools, and communities, though the effectiveness of programmes is highly contingent on factors such as age and the specific needs of communities. Long-term prevention programmes do not usually target specific kinds of crime, but rather aim to decrease violence and anti-social behaviour generally.

The Mayor's Knife Crime Strategy is a step in the right decision, but it does not deliver enough in terms of long-term prevention. This report urges the Mayor to take a longer-term approach to ensure the enduring safety of our young people.

²⁷Violence in the City, World Bank, April 2011, p37-53:
https://www.unicef.org/protection/Violence_in_the_City.pdf

²⁸Quarterly Performance Update Report Q1 2017/18, MOPAC, p16: http://www.reform.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Preventative_criminal_justice_in_Glasgow_Scotland.pdf

Recommendation 2: Develop a long-term (5-10 year) youth violence prevention strategy for London.

This report argues that London needs a long-term violence prevention strategy. Knife crime is a symptom of broader violence-inducing factors, and without long-term planning the impact of the Mayor's interventions will not extend beyond the bounds of his mayoralty. The current Knife Crime Strategy reads as a wish list on what the Mayor wants partners and other organisations to do to reduce knife crime. Develop a long-term (5-10 year) youth violence prevention strategy for London, to ensure that the children of London are properly safeguarded. The strategy should include actions being taken on knife crime and wider violent crime, a plan to monitor outcomes and a mechanism to review the progress being made. This should include key performance indicators (KPIs) and an annual report to the Police and Crime Committee.

SECTION 2: BREAKING DOWN LONDON'S KNIFE CRIME STRATEGY

The Mayor released his Knife Crime Strategy in June 2017. The bulk of the Strategy is dedicated to six areas of action: targeting lawbreakers, offering ways out of crime, keeping deadly weapons off our streets, protecting and educating young people, standing with communities, neighbourhoods and families against knife crime, and supporting victims of knife crime.

As previously stated, this report holds that the greatest issue with the Strategy is that it does not deliver a long-term prevention plan. Enforcement and sales regulation are important, but the impact will be negligible if the causes of violence are not addressed.

Targeting Lawbreakers

The first priority of the Mayor's Knife Crime Strategy is implementing policing and criminal justice measures to tackle knife crime. This includes work such as establishing a specialist knife crime prevention team, implementing technology such as GPS tags, and ensuring that sentencing standards are maintained.

This report is broadly supportive of the Strategy's work in this area but, as noted before, holds that policing and criminal justice work must be accompanied by long-term prevention measures if a meaningful impact is to be made.

Another criticism that applies both to targeting lawbreakers and to supporting victims is that the Strategy does not explore the issue that victims and witnesses are not reporting crimes to the police and are refusing to support prosecutions. As outlined in the previous section, last year there was only about one person proceeded against for every five knife crime incidents. This significantly undermines enforcement and criminal justice efforts. The reasons that victims and witnesses are not working with the police are complex, as has already been explored in section 1.

As I mentioned earlier, social media has been identified as a catalyst for knife crime and other violent behaviour.

The rise of social media has changed our lives, the way we interact with others and how we receive information. It also has a more nefarious side: we've seen it used to radicalise young people into joining terrorist groups such as ISIS, but there is now a recognition that this is also fuelling a rise in knife crime. Perpetrators of knife crime are openly using social media to glorify violence. It is easy to find videos on YouTube (searching for WoodGrange E7²⁹ or Beckton E6³⁰) that glorify knife use.

The Mayor has recognised this in his Knife Crime Strategy, but has not outlined a workable solution. He has previously called for social media companies to remove content, but this is beyond his control as such action is not a mayoral power. The Mayor needs to work with government and, if need be, encourage it to legislate if social media companies fail to act. While this is a problem, it also presents an opportunity to tackle knife crime. The social media posts present the police with a source of intelligence, crimes are being documented, perpetrators can be identified and those uploading and sharing content can be targeted for intervention.

²⁹https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=WoodGrange+E7

³⁰https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Beckton+E6

Gathering intelligence from social media will allow the police to identify those likely to be involved in such behaviour and take appropriate action.³¹

Recommendation 3: Increase the use of intelligence gathering through social media.

Social media has been identified as a catalyst for knife crime and other violent behaviour. Gathering intelligence from social media will allow the police to identify those likely to be involved in such behaviour and take appropriate action. For example, there is a group called WoodGrange E7 that is known to post such content to YouTube.

Protecting and Educating Young People

As noted in section 1, school interventions are one of the key areas for violence prevention interventions. The Strategy presents some strategic school-based interventions, such as the integration of prevention material into school activities and working with education providers. This is combined with important work on youth safety outside of schools. However, there are also a number of strategic points which are less persuasive.

A significant portion of the strategic points in this section are committed towards ensuring the safety of students in schools. This report is not inherently opposed to such measures, but there are two pressing concerns. As previously noted, knife crime in schools appears to account for a very small proportion of all knife crime incidents (accounting for less than one per cent of all incidents in 2016). This suggests increasing security in schools may have a minimal impact on knife crime.

Of greater concern is research done in the USA that suggests school security measures often have a minimal impact on violence and, in some cases, may even cause an increase.^{32,33} This is in addition to concerns about how officers in schools may contribute to the criminalisation of

31 <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/how-londons-knife-culture-is-being-fueled-by-jargon-social-media-and-music-a3579396.html>

32A Structural Analysis of School Violence and Disruption: Implications for Creating Safer Schools, Education and Treatment of Children, 1999: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.127.6322&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

33'School Violence: Association with Control, Security/Enforcement, Educational/Therapeutic Approaches, and Demographic Features', School Psychology Review, 2008: http://209-197-41-56.unassigned.ntelos.net/images/stories/library/Stennett_Psychology_Articles/School%20Violence%20-%20Associations%20with%20Control%20Security-Enforcement%20Education-Therapeutic%20Approaches%20-%20Demographic%20Factors.pdf

children and youth.³⁴ If young people are carrying weapons primarily for personal protection, as the evidence suggests, then increasing security may cause more weapon carrying as the environment is made to appear more dangerous. It is important to acknowledge that the US and the UK have very different standards and practices around policing, but there is little to no comparative research that has been done in the UK to confirm that these interventions work in the UK better than in the States.

This report is highly supportive of the work being done with the Early Intervention Foundation in primary schools, but believes that far more could and should be done.

The London Ambulance Service have a scheme where members of staff visit schools across the capital to talk about their experiences. Since late 2010, Public Education Officer, John Wright has been delivering workshops in schools, colleges and pupil referral units – centres for children who have been excluded from the mainstream education system. This is a useful way of educating young people about the dangers of knife crime and may warrant further research to assess its effectiveness.³⁵

Finally, this report considers that youth engagement work and evidence building to be of paramount importance and urges the Mayor to ensure that he and the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) feed any new evidence back into the Strategy. It is also important that this work be publicised to ensure that the public and scrutiny bodies know what the Strategy is accomplishing.

Offering ways out of crime

Reducing re-offending is an important part of crime prevention, and this report supports many of the strategic points that the Mayor has implemented in this respect, including measures to improve offender employability, improving the integration of prisons in the criminal justice system, and supporting a trauma-informed approach to interventions. It is particularly positive that this section of the Strategy aims to implement a public health approach to the problem.

³⁴Criminalizing Education, St. Catherine University, 2014:
https://www.hamline.edu/uploadedFiles/Hamline_WWW/HSE/Documents/criminalizing-education-zero-tolerance-police.pdf

³⁵http://www.guardian-series.co.uk/news/11513988.Speaking_Out__John_Wright_on_gun_and_knife_crime/

The Strategy would be significantly improved if the approach had been used throughout the report. However, it would be worth exploring whether a more proactive approach could be taken to deterring potential offenders.

The Mayor's solutions to both protecting and educating young people and offering ways out of crime do not go far enough. He needs to enact a full preventative model that brings all partners and resources together in a coordinated approach to reduce violent offending and knife crime. There are some examples of this being successful, such as in counter-radicalisation and the health approach in Scotland.

Earlier in this report I explored the key risk factors of whether an individual will become involved in violence. There are numerous similarities to radicalisation because, as with violent crime and knife crime, those involved tend to be:

- Young people and people from lower income and socio-economic groups;³⁶
- Those who perceive discrimination, experience racial or religious harassment, and have a negative view of policing;³⁷
- People who are socially excluded, marginalised and have limited social mobility, education and employment opportunities;³⁸
- People who are drawn in through social media.³⁹

Looking at the police and government response to radicalisation, there has been success in the early intervention and prevention stages.

CONTEST, the government's Counter Terrorism Strategy is divided in four sections: Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare.⁴⁰ The section known as Prevent is designed to stop people in the UK becoming radicalised in first place, thus preventing terrorist acts in the future. As detailed above, there can be parallels drawn between young people who have been radicalised and young people who have become involved in violent behaviour and knife crime.

36<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhaff/1446/1446.pdf> pg 8

37<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhaff/1446/1446.pdf> pg 9

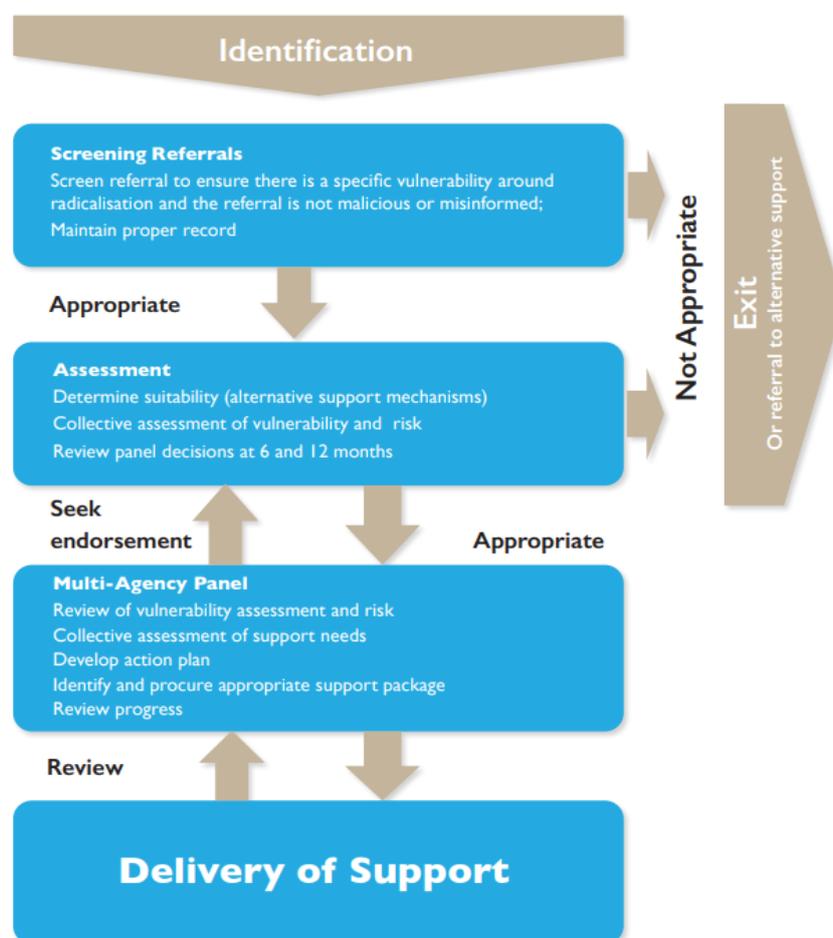
38https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf pg 3

39https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/ran-papers/docs/issue_paper_root-causes_jan2016_en.pdf pg 4

40<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest>

The main aspect of Prevent is the Channel Referral Scheme, which is a multi-agency approach to identify and provide support to individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism by:

- Identifying individuals at risk;
- Assessing the nature and extent of that risk;
- Developing the most appropriate support plan for the individuals concerned.⁴¹
-



Source: Home Office⁴²

The referrals can be made by anyone, but it's often the community, education practitioners, the police and other public bodies who make contact and express concerns.⁴³

While controversial to some, Prevent has been successful in reducing the number of vulnerable individuals engaging in acts of extremism. It has prevented 150 (including 50

⁴¹https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425189/Channel_Duty_Guidance_April_2015.pdf pg 7

⁴²https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/425189/Channel_Duty_Guidance_April_2015.pdf pg 8

⁴³https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/657991/individuals-referred-supported-prevent-programme-apr2015-mar2016-annexa-tables.ods table p.02

children) from travelling to Syria. Both government ministers and the police support this as a vital tool in the fight against terrorism. In 2015/16, 7,631 people were referred to Channel and 381 of them received direct Channel support. The data also shows, that like those involved in knife crime, those referred to the scheme are predominantly young with 5,485 being 30 or younger – this represents a 72 per cent of the total referrals.⁴⁴

Chief Constable Simon Cole, the National Policing Lead for Prevent said: “Prevent is voicing the concerns of people of good conscience. It is stopping people being criminalised, it is safeguarding the vulnerable. It is making us all safer, in a proportionate, thoughtful fashion”.⁴⁵

Home Secretary, Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP said: “Prevent has made a significant impact in preventing people being drawn into terrorism and it is here to stay”.⁴⁶

Case Study

Amina was reported to police about her intention to travel to Syria.

Amina was in her late teens when a report was made to the police about her intention to travel to Syria. Amina had a deeply troubled life with her parents having been engaged in domestic violence. Her parents broke up and she lived with her father. She was lonely. No friends. She was also subjected to a serious assault. All these issues made her turn to religion for answers. But the religious guidance she sought online was uncontrolled. Her social media indicated that she had voiced support for Daesh and a hatred for non-Muslims. Support through Channel enabled Amina to rebuild her relationship with her mother. A female counsellor addressed issues around religion, politics and self-esteem. Amina is now enjoying her new-found life.

Home Office Source

As you can see from the case study, there are some similarities between Amina’s background of family issues, being the victim of violence and social isolation. The

⁴⁴https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/657991/individuals-referred-supported-prevent-programme-apr2015-mar2016-annexa-tables.ods table D.06

⁴⁵<https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/cc-simon-cole-blog-prevent-aiming-to-stop-people-at-risk-being-drawn-into-violent-extremism>

⁴⁶<https://homeofficemedia.blog.gov.uk/2017/08/10/home-secretary-on-the-vital-work-of-prevent-featured-in-the-sun/>

Channel Scheme helped Amina before it was too late and she is now enjoying a new life.

A similar model could be used to tackle knife crime and other violent crime. It could also be used to bring together existing resources for a more coordinated approach to tackling knife crime.

This should however differ in some respects to Channel, which has been accused of being a mechanism for state interference and a way of targeting certain groups.

The Mayor should create a central referral and assessment unit to take reports of those at risk engaging in violent behaviour. This should differ to Channel by being more community-led. A joint panel with subject experts such as police representatives and community leaders should be created to assess those at risk of engaging in knife crime and to decide on what level of intervention is needed. The communities involved should have real ownership over the direction of such a programme.

The main power of the community panel should be referring at-risk individuals to appropriate help, such as:

- Mentoring schemes;
- Sports scheme;
- Youth groups;
- Skill and educational training;
- Housing officers.

Again, unlike Channel, this should be more community led, using pre-existing schemes that meet certain criteria. This would help existing mentoring schemes by creating a mechanism in which people can be easily be referred to them and avoid silo working. There are a number of mentoring schemes operating in London, such as Reach Out UK⁴⁷ and Chance UK.⁴⁸

The new scheme could be called the Community-led Intervention Partnership (CIP). To fund this pilot, the Mayor should apply to the Police Reform and Transformation Board which has £175 million available for police reform projects for 2018/19 financial year to help fund this.⁴⁹

⁴⁷<https://www.reachoutuk.org/>

⁴⁸<http://www.chanceuk.com/become-a-mentor/>

⁴⁹Information provided by the National Police Chiefs' Council

Scotland has already launched a similar scheme for tackling violent behaviour and lessons could be learned from this. Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU), a multi agency group with nationwide jurisdiction. To target current offenders, the VRU combined a zero-tolerance approach to violent crime combined with a strong support programme that was offered to known violent offenders.⁵⁰ The VRU also implemented a number of primary prevention programmes, such as school and community interventions, partnerships with other projects such as "Medics against Violence", and implementing violence prevention material into school curriculum.⁵¹ From 2006 to 2012, violent crime fell drastically in Glasgow, with figures dropping over 38.4 per cent, a decrease which has been significantly credited to the VRU.²³ If we applied this to current knife crime levels, 14,348⁵² in London, we could see a reduction of 5,010 incidents. This would reduce knife crime to 9,338, taking us back to levels before the Mayor came to power in 2014/15 (9,990).⁵³ Applying to other various 2017 crime statistics, it may be possible to see:

- Murder reduced from 130⁵⁴ to 80
- Wounding GBH reduced from 25,575⁵⁵ to 15,754
- Possession of an Offensive Weapon from 6,782⁵⁶ to 4,178

The initiative brings together a wide range of public services and agencies, including from healthcare, criminal justice, education, housing and social services, to provide coordinated interventions for young people involved with gang violence, offering both tough enforcement and, crucially, integrated support. The unit's running costs totals around £1 million per annum, funded by the Scottish Government over an eight-year period, the total cost was £7.6 million.⁵⁷ This would equate to £2 million over a two-year period. The Mayor should consider this priority to

50Violence Reduction Unit, Reform, p2: http://www.reform.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Preventative_criminal_justice_in_Glasgow_Scotland.pdf

51Violence Reduction Unit, Reform, p3: http://www.reform.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Preventative_criminal_justice_in_Glasgow_Scotland.pdf

52<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/mopac-performance-framework>

53<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/data-and-statistics/mopac-performance-framework>

54<https://www.met.police.uk/stats-and-data/crime-data-dashboard/>

55<https://www.met.police.uk/stats-and-data/crime-data-dashboard/>

56<https://www.met.police.uk/stats-and-data/crime-data-dashboard/>

57<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-42690960>

receive funding from the £15.1 million anti-knife crime money.

Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)

A decade ago Glasgow was branded the murder capital of Europe.

In January 2005, the force established the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU). The unit's remit was to target all forms of violent behaviour, in particular knife crime and weapon carrying among young men in and around Glasgow.

Influenced by the World Health Organisation's World Report on Violence and Health (2002), the newly formed VRU became the only police force in the world to adopt a public health approach to violence. Treating it like a disease the VRU sought to diagnose the problem, analyse the causes, examine what works and for whom and develop solutions.

To achieve this the unit teamed up with agencies in the fields of health, education and social work. The aim was to create long-term attitudinal change in society rather than a quick fix. The VRU also focused on enforcement seeking to contain and manage individuals who carry weapons or who were involved in violent behaviour.

In April 2006, the unit's remit was extended nationwide creating a Scottish centre of expertise on tackling violent crime. Funded by the Scottish Government the unit's job was to tackle violence in all its forms.

The VRU team is a mixture of researchers, police officers, civilian staff and former offenders who have turned their lives around and are now seeking to help others do the same.

More than a decade on from the formation of the VRU Glasgow is no longer the murder capital of Europe and recorded crime in Scotland is at a forty year low.

The experience in Scotland suggests that one way forward for building connections with young people is to combine rigorous enforcement with rigorous multi-agency support. This approach appears to have been so effective in Scotland because it ensured that potential offenders knew the risks that they would be caught, but also proactively provided them with alternative opportunities. This represents a good model on which to start. The suggestions earlier do go

further, as greater community involvement is needed, especially with the mistrust of the police within the affected communities in London. The key tactic used in the Prevent Programme that I feel can benefit this scheme is the referral mechanism, where anyone can be referred and assessed, not requiring an incident to occur.

Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit indicates how effective a multi-agency public health approach can be. London needs its own tailored violence-prevention strategy to address the challenges it is facing.

Recommendation 4: Pilot a new referral programme based on the Government's CONTEST Strategy and use Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) as an example on how to manage this.

The counter-radicalisation programme known as CONTEST has been successful in preventing vulnerable individuals from engaging in acts of extremism by taking referrals of those at risk and, when needed, helping them. It has prevented 150 people (including 50 children) from travelling to Syria. Scotland's VRU is a good example of this. However, given the nature of knife crime, this new referral programme should have a greater level of community leadership than the VRU and CONTEST, with parents and grandparents playing a role. There should be community representation at the leadership level and existing mentoring schemes should be incorporated into this programme to help those most at risk. There are potentially two funding sources for this recommendation. Firstly, this would be an ideal initiative for the Mayor to use his recently announced and, as yet, unallocated £15 million fund to tackle knife crime. Secondly, as young adults are one of the key targets of this recommendation, the Mayor could also use the Skills and Adult Education Devolved Budget that is due in 2019.

Keeping deadly weapons off our street

One of the Strategy's ambitions is to limit the availability of knives through a variety of retailer-targeted interventions, such as extending test purchases to online sales, increasing awareness and access to staff-training material, and naming

and shaming retailers who are repeatedly found to be selling illegally to children. Though retailers that sell knives to children and youth deserve to be punished, the emphasis placed on this work seems highly disproportionate to its probable impact, and risks distracting from more important interventions.

Sales restrictions only have the potential to impact on the 25 per cent of perpetrators under 18.⁵⁸ Further, knives are not like acid and guns in that most children already have ready access to knives in their homes. Finally, though the data is not of particularly good quality, according to hospital statistics, most stabbing victims admitted to hospitals in the UK were stabbed with kitchen knives (34 per cent, with 27.3 per cent stabbed with unidentified weapons and 21.5 per cent stabbed with unidentified knives).⁵⁹ Given these factors, it is questionable that this work warrants being one of the Mayor's major strategic points.

Police Reputation with Communities, Neighbourhoods, and Families

Section 1 of this report identified that community and family interventions were two of the most important categories. Unfortunately, as has been the theme throughout, the points in this section of the strategy do not go nearly far enough in terms of long-term prevention. The main strategic focus of this section seems to be providing support to communities and families after an incident has occurred. This is important work, but, as explored in section 1, it is crucial that it be supplemented with long-term preventative work at both the familial and community level.

Parents need to be shown the skills to prevent their children from becoming involved in violence, while support needs to be given for communities to enhance their relationships with local services, such as the police, and to promote social connectivity. The seed funding pot may contribute to the latter, but it remains important to have a central strategy.

It is also vital that parents and family members are given the information they need to spot risky behaviour and what action can be taken to address this. This could be done

⁵⁸Freedom of Information Report 2017090000781, Metropolitan Police Service, November 2017

⁵⁹'Knife Crime' Seventh report of the session 2008-2009, Home Affairs Committee, May 2009, p79: <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmhaff/112/112i.pdf>

within existing budgets, 20,000 double sided leaflets cost under £500.⁶⁰

Recommendation 5.1: Produce an advertising campaign aimed at parents, grandparents and community elders encouraging them to speak to their children about knife crime. This could include leaflets and posters at GP offices, hospitals, on public transport and in job centres. These can give advice on what to look for, what they can say and how to help those at risk of engaging in violent behaviour. Such an approach has worked well with other crimes such as drink-driving.

It's often difficult to get across messages to those impacted by knife crime. As discussed in this report, they don't engage with the police and other public authorities. The Mayor's recent social media campaign has been reliant on young people to share the messaging rather than pushing the messaging to them. Currently the YouTube video launched by the Mayor has under 9,000 views.⁶¹ Compared to the some of the videos that I mentioned earlier in the report which can views upwards of six figures, it's easy to see the Mayor's messaging isn't going to enough people or even the right people.

Authorities tasked with reducing high-harm behaviour in other areas are frequently turning to high impact advertising to get their messages across. By high impact, I mean messages that contain graphical content and uncomfortable messaging. Recent examples include a campaign by Public Health England who ran a graphic campaign showing the effect on the human body of smoking.⁶² Another campaign by West Midland's Police showed a car accident and the aftermath, resulting from drink driving.⁶³ Similar techniques could easily be applied to knife crime. Modern advertising is good value for money. For example, a targeted advertising campaign on Facebook costs just £7,000 per a week and has

⁶⁰[https://www.vistaprint.co.uk/marketing-materials/flyers?txi=16907&xnid=TopNav_Flyers++\(linked+item\)_Marketing+Materials&xnav=TopNav](https://www.vistaprint.co.uk/marketing-materials/flyers?txi=16907&xnid=TopNav_Flyers++(linked+item)_Marketing+Materials&xnav=TopNav)

⁶¹<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4ewFdCxd5Y&feature=youtu.be>

⁶²<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/dec/29/hard-hitting-new-advert-urges-smokers-to-quit>

⁶³<http://metro.co.uk/2017/12/01/police-videos-hit-home-reality-of-drink-driving-at-christmas-7124874/>

a potential reach of 1.8 million.⁶⁴ Setting aside £100,000 from the £15 million anti-knife crime funding would cover such a campaign.

Recommendation 5.2: Run a hard-hitting social media campaign. Use hard-hitting messaging, images, videos and stories to deter young people from carrying knives. This could include interviews with family members of victims of knife crime and those who have spent time in prison and now regret their actions. This should be reinforced with positive messaging, such as stories of former offenders who have changed their lives for the better.

Supporting Victims of Knife Crime

This report supports the victim focused work that's in the Knife Crime Strategy, but there is an unwillingness among victims and witnesses to work with the police. One of the major contributing factors seems to be a lack of faith that the police can provide protection. When supporting victims, it seems a matter of paramount importance to ensure that they feel safe. Protecting these victims and witnesses can be a particularly thorny challenge because they may not be only at risk of harm from their original assailant, but are also at risk of retribution and ostracisation from other members of their community.

Summary

The Mayor's knife crime strategy does deliver important work in several areas, but it does not do enough in terms of long-term prevention, lacks ideas to address the issues and fails to mention how progress will be monitored. Specific opportunities for improvements to the strategy have been noted throughout this section. The next section of this report will explore three broader themes that are not sufficiently addressed in the Knife Crime Strategy and which could constitute core components of a long-term violence prevention plan.

SECTION 3: BEYOND THE KNIFE CRIME STRATEGY

London needs a long-term youth violence prevention strategy. The Mayor's Knife Crime Strategy does not plan far enough ahead, and it places too much emphasis on

⁶⁴<https://www.facebook.com/ads/manager/creation/creation/?act=32374360&pid=p1>

addressing the symptoms of knife crime rather than the causes. The existing strategy could be adapted, or it could be used as a foundation to develop a longer-term plan, but more work needs to be done. In the first section of this report the importance of taking the public health approach to violence reduction was identified. Based on the evidence reviewed and the current strengths and weaknesses of the Strategy, I believe that has not gone far enough to address the problems. In this section I will look at new and emerging ideas that can be used to reduce knife related crime. A key part of this section will be technology, both current and emerging.

Changing problematic behaviour

It is not just the police and the Mayor's central office that can lead the fight against knife crime; the Mayor has numerous assets at his disposal. A good example is the Fire Service, it may not be the first thing that comes to mind in the fight against knife crime. As explained earlier in this report, those affected by knife crime often lack trust in the police. The Fire Service does not have this issue; they can be positive roles models for young people.⁶⁵

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service has launched an initiative to help young people who have been identified as engaging in risky behaviour and then trains them as young firefighters. This helps them develop the skills and understanding necessary for the students' development as active and responsible citizens.

⁶⁵http://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/3660047.Essex__Firebreak_courses_help_teens_find_self_worth_and_respect/

Case Study

Firebreak offers agencies an opportunity to tailor the course around the needs of the young person.

It includes the same basic framework of the traditional firebreak and can include but is not limited to:

- Safe Sex and Teenage Pregnancy
- Anti-Social Behaviour and the Cycle of Offending
- Alcohol and Drugs Abuse
- Domestic Violence & the Importance of Worthwhile and Fulfilling Relationships
- Community Engagement
- Bullying and Cyber Safety

This course has been designed to focus on reducing re-offending and reoffending in general, tackling the consequence of alcohol and drug abuse, and improving road safety.

Should there be a particular subject matter that agencies would like us to work to, we will ensure we do our very best to meet their requirements.

Evaluation

The young person's level of understanding, attitude and awareness is measured pre and post course.

Group role play and group discussions help build confidence and enable young peoples experience the possible impact of certain issues in a safe and protected environment.

A member of the Firebreak team contacts the students 3 months and 6 months after the course to offer support and reinforce important points of the course content.

Source: Essex Fire and Rescue Service

Another scheme that is working in London is multi-systematic therapy (MST). MST "recognises the influence that family, school, work, peers and the local community can all exert on a young person's behaviour". Purpose-trained therapists work with youth at risk of out-of-home placement (care or custody) due to offending or severe behavioral issues over three to five months. Treatment aims to address

youth behaviour in a holistic way. To give some examples, an individual regime may target poor behaviour or attendance in schools, barriers that prevent a caregiver from delivering proper care and oversight (e.g. depression, poor parenting skills), and work to cultivate the youth's involvement in positive recreational activities. Investing in Children estimates that £9,700 can save almost £20,000.⁶⁶

⁶⁶A fresh start to tackling youth crime, Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour, 2013, p17: http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/uploads/holding/projects/fresh_start_to_tackling_youth_crime.pdf

Case Study

Michael was referred to MST by YOT when he was 15 year olds. At this time, he was subject to a referral order for stabbing a young woman and there were concerns about his anti-social behaviour in the community (loitering and unruly behaviour) which was placing his family's housing tenancy at risk.

There were also concerns regarding aggression at home and at school. Michael's parents reported that he was having regular physical fights with his 17 year old brother (who was also known to the YOT). There had also been a number of aggressive incidents at school ranging from throwing furniture to assaulting students and members of staff, which had resulted in three school exclusions.

At the start of the work with MST, Michael was not in any form of education. MST helped to turn Michael's life around. The team worked with Michael's family to reduce his aggression at home and in the community; ensure he was in full time education; prevent further offending in the community and support the successful completion of his YOT order

By the end of MST, Michael successfully completed his YOT order with no further arrests. Aggressive incidents had significantly reduced within the home with no reports of aggression in the community. Michael also successfully obtained a full time place on an Information and Technology course within a mainstream college. He was also acting as a mentor for younger children. As a result of the improvements the family's tenancy was no longer at risk and the parents reported a happier, calmer home environment.

Recommendation 6: Ensure that there are good quality community and agency-led initiatives that support young people gaining skills and employment opportunities in order to reduce violent crime.

An excellent example of this is the Firebreak Scheme in Essex. The scheme, run by Essex Fire Service, takes young people who have been identified as engaging in risky behaviour and then trains them as young firefighters. This

helps develop the skills and understanding necessary for the students' development as active and responsible citizens. The Mayor should launch a similar scheme for the London Fire Brigade. This is inexpensive, with each course costing £4,000, meaning a pilot in each borough would cost £128,000. Another good example is multi-systematic therapy (MST), which provides trained therapists to work with youth at risk of out-of-home placement (care or custody) due to offending or severe behavioral issues over three to five months. This can be funded from the Skills and Adult Education Devolved Budget.

Current and Emerging Technologies

Technology is changing, it's becoming more complex and intelligent. This has presented law enforcement with new challenges, but it also presents new opportunities to change the fight against crime by integrating artificial intelligence with everyday policing.

Durham Constabulary has tested technology to determine whether a suspect is at a low, medium or high risk of offending to determine if they are released from custody to help with officers' decision-making.⁶⁷ The details of the initiative is included in the below case study.

Case Study

The Harm Assessment Risk Tool (Hart) was trained to recognise patterns of recidivism by studying the offending behaviour of criminals gathered over a five-year period.

Durham Constabulary in the UK taught the algorithm using records taken between 2008 and 2012.

The software can determine whether a suspect is at a low, medium or high risk of offending once they are released from custody.

They found that AI was 98 per cent accurate in its predictions for low risk offenders and 88 per cent accurate when it came to high risk suspects.

Text 1: Source: Daily Mail

This does present ethical issues as a suspect for a crime is kept in custody based on the likelihood of committing a

⁶⁷<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4491330/Police-Durham-use-Minority-Report-style-AI.html>

crime in the future. It should be noted that this is not a mass assessment tool where members of the public will be arrested if they are deemed at risk of committing crime; it is used when somebody has already been arrested and is simply a tool to be used to manage them while the investigation takes place. It helps the police make decisions and target their resources in an efficient way while minimising the risks to the public.

Hart is a general crime fighting tool, not specific to knife or violent crime, but it can help. As noted earlier in the report, those engaged in knife crime have exposure to and early participation in anti-social behaviour and crime. This creates a pattern which can be fed into Hart to assess the likelihood of future offending and allow for intervention to take place.

Not only can AI be used a tool to help officers make more informed decisions, it can be used to detect crime as it occurs.

As discussed earlier in the report, communities affected by knife crime often distrust the police, and reporting of such incidents is low. Combine this with London being a large world city with an estimated population of 8.63 million people ⁶⁸, it's hard to detect this type of crime until someone is hurt or killed. However, there are an estimated 51,000 cameras run by the police in the Capital that could capture incidents on film.⁶⁹ But it would almost impossible for staff to monitor all of these cameras, and even looking at the footage when it is known that a crime has been committed is resource-intensive and often only used in serious cases such as murders.⁷⁰

New AI technology has emerged that can process and analyse multiple videos feeds to look for suspicious and criminal behaviour.⁷¹ Not only can this technology detect behaviour patterns, it can also scan for objects. This could be adapted to look for knives when shown in public places.⁷²

The AI technology shouldn't make the decision on whether a crime has been committed and whether action should be

⁶⁸<http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/london-population/>

⁶⁹<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/most-spied-on-cities-in-the-world.html>

⁷⁰<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/crime/6082530/1000-CCTV-cameras-to-solve-just-one-crime-Met-Police-admits.html>

⁷¹<http://uk.businessinsider.com/security-cameras-use-artificial-intelligence-to-detect-crime-2015-8?r=US&IR=T>

⁷²<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-4488614/New-AI-team-CCTV-predict-move.html>

taken. It should instead flag the footage to a human operator who can then determine a course of action should be taken and what that should be.

The Met should apply to the Police Reform and Transformation Fund to run a pilot using this technology.

Recommendation 7: Pilot new AI technologies to aid policing. Technology is changing all the time and too often the Metropolitan Police Service are late embracers of such change. There are two ways in which the MPS could utilise greater use of technology to aid in this regard:

7.1 Smart CCTV - CCTV has long been a crime fighting tool, but is only called upon once a serious crime has been committed. Emerging artificial intelligence technology can be used to aid the fight against crime by detecting it as it takes place. Algorithms now exist that can monitor CCTV and look for suspicious and criminal behaviour. This can also be used to identify objects, therefore can be used to detect knives when shown in a public place. Smart CCTV will help in times of tight budgets as it can free police officers and staff from searching through video footage for evidence. This can also detect crime that may otherwise go unreported or get reported when the perpetrators have left the scene.

7.2 AI Assisted Decision Making - Durham Constabulary has tested technology to determine whether a suspect is at a low, medium or high risk of offending once they are released from custody. This will help reduce harm to the public by helping police officers make more informed decisions on the risk an individual poses to public safety. While this is for all general crime, those committing knife-related offences often have had previous contact with law enforcement.

Access to private surveillance cameras

When the police receive a report of crime, all they have is information provided in that contact. When a knife crime has taken place, the operator receiving the report may not have a description of the suspect or know if they're still on the scene.

To provide call centre operators with better information, CCTV feeds could be made available to police force control rooms as modern surveillance cameras offer instant access to live feeds from anywhere in the world. This has already

been tried. A police department and a branch of McDonald's in New Zealand has recently taken advantage of this. The McDonald's branch has allowed the local police to access live streams from its CCTV.⁷³

The Mayor could launch a voluntary scheme to allow the Met to access the external cameras of business that are using a streaming based system, this would have several benefits:

- Allow call handlers to access incidents if they have access to CCTV in the vicinity.
- Allow call handlers to identify a subject and share images with officers.
- Make it easier to retrieve evidence and when a crime has been committed.

This would make it easier to identify and catch those involved in knife crime. This can be done using existing resources as it only requires basic IT skills.

Recommendation 8: Introduce a scheme for businesses to allow the police to access live streams of external surveillance cameras to improve detection and prosecution rates.

The Mayor could launch a voluntary scheme to allow the Met to access the external cameras of businesses that are using a streaming-based system. This would provide the police control operator with more accurate information in real time and allow for a better assessment to be made to determine what action should be taken.

Working with the community

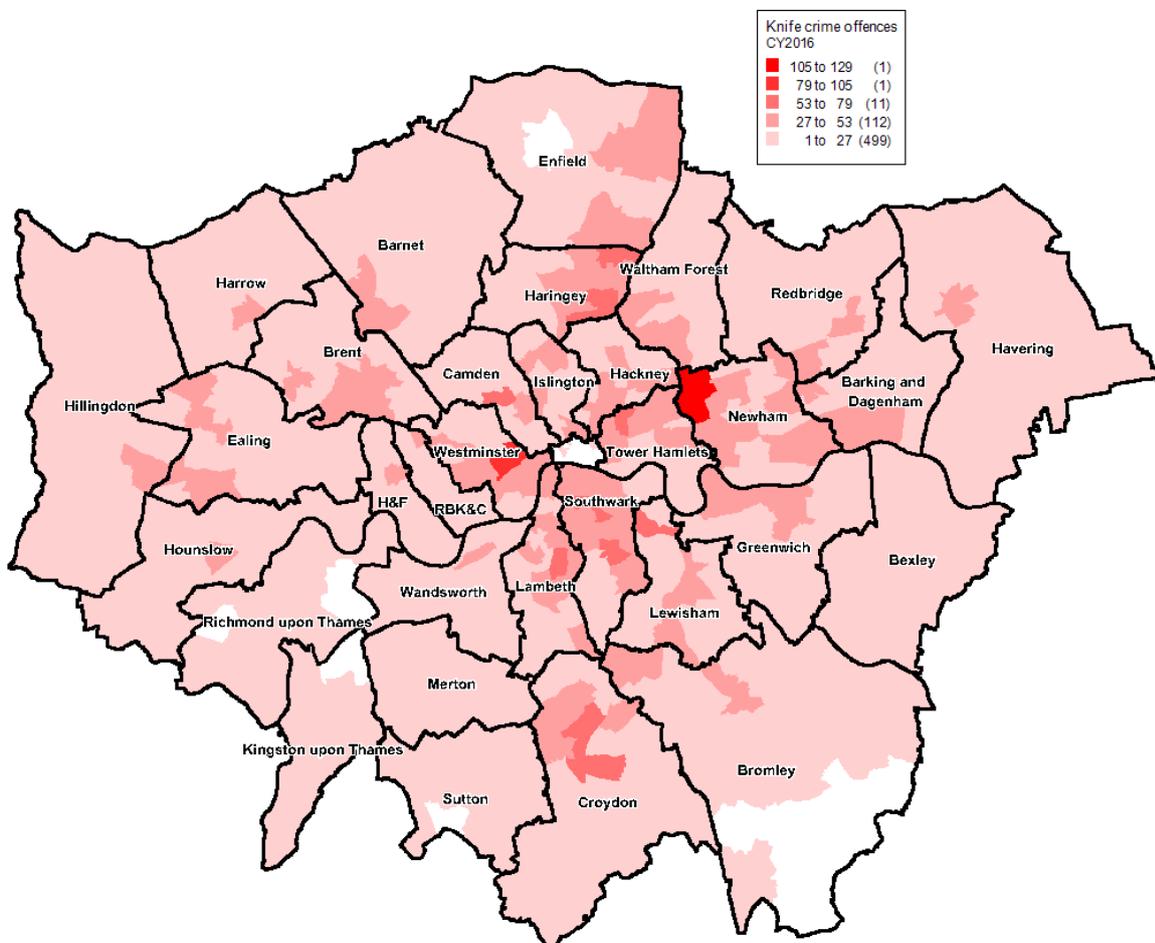
As reviewed in the first section of this report, communities have a significant role to play when it comes to preventing and mitigating violence. Strong connectivity within a community can have a suppressing effect on violence, and enables members to enact collective action. It is also important that communities be well-connected with external services so that, for example, the police know who to talk to when incidents occur.

The Mayor's Knife Crime Strategy does have several interventions that are aimed at communities, but some of

⁷³<https://www.radionz.co.nz/national/programmes/checkpoint/audio/2018619773/mcdonald-s-live-streaming-cctv-to-police>

the evidence provided to this report highlighted problems with the current approach, and concerns were raised by Duwayne Brooks and Winston Goode of the charity, Juvenis on how effective these interventions were.^{12,74}

Of particular concern was whether the local knife crime plans were being implemented in close communication with affected communities. This is not intended as a criticism of the police, but rather to call upon the Mayor and MOPAC, in light of the reviewed evidence, to provide further guidance to forces on working with communities, particularly in those areas and neighborhoods which are beset with violent knife crime, such as Newham, Croydon, and Haringey (See MOPAC knife crime map below, Westminster may be a special case).



Slideshow graphic, Metropolitan Police. Received December 2017

⁷⁴Interview with Winston Good, November 2017

A second concern that was raised pertained to the distribution of the £250,000 anti-knife crime seed funding. Winston Goode argued that it is crucial that local members of affected communities be made aware of the fund and have the opportunity to make applications.³¹

The other area of intervention was increasing connectivity within communities. As reviewed in section 1, community connectivity can have a very positive impact. One example of a highly successful programme in this area is Communities that Care run by Catch 22. Communities that Care is a five-phase process that has been developed for communities to improve outcomes for youth and reduce problematic behaviour. The programme guides communities through a process to gather stakeholders, identify problems, and develop and implement a rigorous and assessable action-plan drawing on a data-base of tried and tested interventions. A randomised control trial in the States found that in under four years young people in communities that implemented the process were involved in less crime and anti-social behaviour. It was estimated that over five dollars were saved for every dollar invested.⁷⁵

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is an opportunity for the Mayor to build on the foundation of his Knife Crime Strategy a long-term violence prevention programme to ensure that our children and youth are being helped and protected in the way that they deserve. This report has explored ways in which the current Knife Crime Strategy could be improved, and detailed three core areas which need to be further developed for long-term violence prevention. Hopefully, these can act as a springboard to stimulate discussion and launch a prevention strategy that will help generations of young Londoners for years to come. The collaborators of this report, Shaun Bailey and Duwayne Brooks, are ready to work with the Mayor by sharing their experience, knowledge, and the connections developed in the writing of this report.

75A fresh start to tackling youth crime, Independent Commission on Youth Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour, 2013, p9-10: http://www.police-foundation.org.uk/uploads/holding/projects/fresh_start_to_tackling_youth_crime.pdf

The Mayor's Knife Crime Strategy has so far failed to have any measurable impact on knife crime. There are numerous flaws in the strategy, mainly:

- The report mentions 'A multi-agency partnership approach', but there is little detail on what the Mayor will do within the strategy. He mainly passes responsibility to organisations that the Mayor has little or no influence over;
- The report lacks vision – there are few, if any, innovative ideas in the strategy. The recommendations that incorporate ideas used elsewhere in policing and emerging thinking around new technology;
- It lacks any tangible timescales and has no proper review mechanism or key performance indicators;
- The Mayor's main way of responding to knife crime killings is to re-use previous press releases and announcements;
- The strategy reads as a wish list, rather than a well-thought out plan or strategy.

The Mayor's main way of responding to knife crime killings is to reuse previous press releases and announcements. Reducing knife crime is something that I am passionate about. The victims of knife crimes are more than just a statistic, they are human beings with dreams, aspirations and potential; they have families, friends and people who love and will miss them.

The recommendations below, directed towards the Mayor and MOPAC, identify opportunities for improving the Knife Crime Strategy and provides tangible ideas that can be used to reduce knife crime in both the short and long term.

1. Refocus stop and search mainly to target knife crime.

2. Develop a long-term (5-10 year) youth violence prevention strategy for London.

3: Increase the use of intelligence gathering through social media.

4: Pilot a new referral programme based on the Government's CONTEST Strategy and use Scotland's Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) as an example on how to manage this.

5: Run targeted advertising campaigns.

5.1: Produce an advertising campaign aimed at parents, grandparents and community elders encouraging them to speak to their children about knife crime.

5.2: Run a hard-hitting social media campaign.

6: Ensure that there are good quality community and agency-led initiatives that support young people gaining skills and employment opportunities in order to reduce violent crime.

7: Pilot new AI technologies to aid policing.

7.1: Smart CCTV

7.2: AI Assisted Decision Making

8: Introduce a scheme for businesses to allow the police to access live streams of external surveillance cameras to improve detection and prosecution rates.