



NEW SCOTLAND YARD

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Response to Policy Exchange report re: knife crime in London

An open letter from Commander Alex Murray, the Met's lead for tackling violence in response to the Policy Exchange report on Knife Crime in the Capital.

“I welcome research that highlights the disproportionate effect violence has on communities and some of the recommendations have real value in challenging what we can all do to tackle violence. However this report did miss the most recent trends associated with knife crime and also failed to understand the huge efforts the Met undertakes to tackle violence, above and beyond stop and search.

“Data shows reductions in knife crime and across most serious violence crime categories. Current total knife crime offences have seen a 21% (2,788) reduction at 10,365, compared to 13,153 (RY 2019/20) in the same period last year. Knife crime with injury has also declined by 6% (216) from 3,360 to 3,144, while the volume of knife injury victims under 25 has reduced by 4% (52) to 1,224 as compared to 1,276 in the same period last year.

“We believe that the careful use of stop and search saves lives. Every month it removes around 400 dangerous weapons off the streets of London that could well be used in violence. We are taking steps to better listen and respond to concerns around stop and search. We are working with our communities to improve the use of the tactic, including involving community members in our training, where they give an insight into their lived experiences of being stopped and searched. Our use of these powers is rightly scrutinised both within the Met and externally through the Community Monitoring Groups and the Independent Office for Police Conduct. The report does highlight the significant disproportionality suffered by young black men in relation to knife crime, which is of great concern to us, and an issue we have previously spoken about.

“The report did not focus on the other efforts the Met is undertaking to tackle violence. Every day we have officers in hot spots of violence – and we know this has an impact. We are also engaged in understanding the causes of violence in defined areas and tackling those causes with partners. This is known as problem orientated policing. These are both highly regarded evidence-based interventions supported by the College of Policing ‘what works’ centre for crime reduction. In addition, we are involved in positive action initiatives in areas where there is a need to build trust. ‘Innovation’ hubs involve the community and police coming together to tackle violence.

“Further efforts include:

- The management of risk around people who have been violent to prevent further escalation.
- Introducing knife crime prevention orders and other interventions like gang injunctions.
- Officers working within schools and numerous youth engagement initiatives.

“We have many diversionary programmes with our partners for those who

come through our custody suites to offer an alternative pathway out of criminality.

“We know that gang-related violence is funded by criminality and causes misery to communities - we share their concerns. We have dedicated teams working to dismantle the gangs in London by targeting those involved and ending their criminal operations by seizing their cash, drugs and weaponry. In the last year alone we have seized 750 tonnes of drugs and in FY 2020/21 we made cash seizures of over £30 million. Our county lines operations have led to over 1,700 people being charged and more than 500 vulnerable people being safeguarded since November 2019, more than anywhere else in the country. We have specialised teams working to remove content online which incites or encourages violence. This year (to August 2021), we have successfully removed 486 videos and referred a further 550 videos to social media platforms for removal.

“In listening to our communities, we have committed 500 officers to form town centre teams, based permanently in busy neighbourhoods and a further 150 officers to join London’s dedicated ward officers. These extra officers will patrol at particularly busy times, including evenings, to have the most impact on crimes and public safety.

“Tackling violence remains the top priority for everyone in the Met. Our efforts are multi-faceted, from prevention and diversion work through to enforcement. We believe that evidence-based interventions should drive our approach to tackling violence. We will do what has been shown to be effective and we will rigorously test different interventions in a desire to continually improve. We continue to work with our partners and communities to drive down violence and find meaningful solutions to a complex issue.”