The evidence base for tackling knife crime

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The College’s role

The independent professional body supporting everyone working in policing to reduce crime and keep people safe.

- Share knowledge and good practice
- Set standards
- Support professional development
Research evidence - summary

Tailored approaches to specific problems

Focussed deterrence and early intervention

Multi-agency and multi-faceted solutions
What is knife crime?

▪ ‘Knife crime’ is defined as any offence that satisfies both of the following criteria:

  ▪ homicide, attempted murder, assault with intent to cause harm, assault with injury, threats to kill, sexual offences (including rape) and robbery;
  ▪ Where a knife or sharp instrument has been used to injure, used as a threat, or the victim was convinced a knife was present during the offence.

▪ ‘Knife Carrying’ / Possession

  ▪ It is classed as a possession offence for a person to have with them in any public place or school premises any offensive weapon without “lawful authority or reasonable excuse”.
  ▪ An "offensive weapon" is defined as “any article made or adapted for use for causing injury to the person”. 
Total violent and sexual offences involving a knife or sharp instrument recorded by the police

Source: Home Office - Police recorded crime. England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total possession of an article with a blade or point offences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>13,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>11,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>11,381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>10,780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>9,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>9,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>10,004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>11,084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>12,382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>13,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>14,205</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total homicides and those involving a knife

![Bar chart showing total homicides and those involving a knife from Apr '10 to Mar '17.](chart)

Source: Home Office - Police recorded crime. England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police)
Motivations

for weapon carrying have broadly been categorized in three ways…

- **Self protection and fear** are particularly significant motivations for individuals who have prior experience of victimisation, and may be characterised as ‘defensive’ weapon-carrying;

- **Self-presentation** is perceived to play an important role for individuals who seek to conjure notions of ‘street credibility’ and ‘respect’ where they perceive a lack of access to status symbols;

- **Utility** motivates those who use weapons to facilitate other behaviours, we may characterize this as ‘offensive’ weapon-carrying.
Risk factors

There is some evidence that the following risk factors may be associated with increased risk of violence and/or weapon carrying…

- **Gender** - males are more likely to commit serious violence and carry weapons
- **Age** - self-reported weapon carrying peaks around the age of fifteen
- **Adverse childhood experiences** – including abuse, neglect, parental criminality and/or substance abuse, being taken into care
- **Educational attainment** – school exclusion and low attainment
- **Ethnicity** – recent analysis of data collected in the UK indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between ethnicity and weapon carrying
Interventions with the greatest potential

**Focussed deterrence**
A comprehensive problem solving approach - ‘Pulling levers’

- targets **prolific or repeat offenders**, combining improved access to support with strict enforcement (sometimes called a ‘carrot and stick’ approach).

Successful implementation of these types of approaches involves:

- **multi-agency working** involving a range of partners including law enforcement, social services and community-based practitioners;
- **analytical work** to identify key offenders, groups, and behaviour patterns;
- developing a response to offenders that uses a **variety of interventions**, both access to services and support, and criminal justice processes - 'pulling levers'
- **directly and repeatedly communicating with offenders** to make them understand why they are receiving this special attention.
Interventions with the greatest potential

Early intervention and prevention programmes
A range of programmes show positive effects.

- Target ‘at risk’ young people to change norms and values towards violence at a young age

Early intervention programmes that have shown promising effects include:
- child skills training – teaching social and emotional skills, problem solving and anger management
- behavioural parent training – supporting parents to reinforce good behaviour
- mentoring – with an emphasis on emotional support and role modelling
- after school recreational activities – teaching skills in a structured and supervised environment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intervention</th>
<th>Impact on crime</th>
<th>How it works</th>
<th>Where it works</th>
<th>How to do it</th>
<th>What it costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggression Replacement Training (ART) for reducing antisocial behaviour</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for Domestic Violence</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>Domestic abuse sanctions</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>£</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>£</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relationship violence education</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second response to domestic abuse</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth curfews</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>£</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Evidence gaps

Multi-agency approaches
- Testing of focussed deterrence in a UK/ E&W context
- Testing the impact of “public health” interventions on serious violence in the UK/ E&W

Building on limited existing evidence
- Stop and search in violence hot spots
- Knife bins and knife amnesties
- Local community and educational interventions
- Publication of knife crime images

Generating evidence in new areas
Overall lack of evidence in relation to different tactical approaches, e.g.
- Weapons sweeps
- Age restrictions on knife purchases
- Targeting Habitual Knife Carriers
Vulnerability and violent crime programme

Objectives

- **Creation of new evidence** to support policing to tackle high priority areas such as protecting vulnerable people, or to support a strategic shift to the prevention of both crime and non-crime related demand.

- The **implementation of initiatives that ‘work’** at the local and National level **is accelerated**, particularly in the area of vulnerability.

- **Use of evidence based approaches** in professional practice **are embedded** within policing culture.
Call for practice

- How amenable to robust evaluation is the intervention?
- How operationally useful is the intervention?
- How innovative is the intervention?
- What level of harm does the intervention aim to address?
- What is the overall scale of threat the intervention aims to address?
Gangs and Youth Violence

1. Op Divan
   (N. Yorkshire/Met)
   • Young people <18s
   • Intel to suggest carrying or risk of carrying knives
   • School or home visits
   • Education, support and diversion

2. DIVERT
   (Met)
   • Young people 18-25
   • Police custody
   • Custody intervention coaches
   • Education training and employment + other support
   • Aim - national rollout

3. CIRV
   (Northamptonshire)
   • All ages but mostly <18s
   • Gang violence
   • Community initiative to reduce violence
   • Tailored support
   • Disruption
Emerging findings

- Active Listening
- Empathy
- Trust & Rapport
- Influence
- Behaviour Change

Source: Behaviour Change Stairway Model, FBI
Conclusions / Implications

- Be specific
- Evaluate
- Collaborate
Resources (these are links)

Knife Crime Briefing
Crime Reduction Toolkit
Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme

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