

# Written evidence submitted by the West Midlands Police (BYC031)

## 1.0 West Midlands Police Background and Context

West Midlands Police provides policing services to the metropolitan area of the West Midlands. The police force area covers 348 square miles in the centre of England. There are areas of deprivation and affluence in the West Midlands. Around 2.8 million people live in a predominantly urban setting. The force covers the West Midlands conurbation, including the cities of Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Coventry and large surrounding townships. The resident population is ethnically very diverse, with 30 percent from black, Asian and minority ethnic communities, and is increased by a large number of university students and the large numbers who visit, socialise in, commute into, or travel through the area each year. The transport infrastructure includes major rail stations and a major airport.

The West Midlands is an incredibly diverse region, housing a large array of cultures, nationalities and religions. With this diversity, comes complexity and challenge that West Midlands Police (WMP) must address and overcome to deliver a quality service to the public.

Whilst the force represents approximately 4.9% of policing spend, it consistently experiences higher proportions of demand when compared to many other forces, for example, the force receive 7% of national 999 emergency calls for service and manage 7% of sex offenders.

The austerity measures faced by the force are harder than most, driven by the funding formula and slower growth as a result of the lower council tax base in the force area. Accordingly, based on the split between how the force is funded via both precept and the central police grant, the force has been negatively impacted to a greater extent than other forces. HMICFRS identify that WMP is the poorest funded force per capita in its Most Similar Force (MSF) grouping.

The population served by the force has a number of characteristics associated with increased levels of vulnerability. This includes high levels of deprivation, lowest educational attainment, high concentrations of BAME communities and the largest percentage of population under 25 of any UK county. The West Midlands has, as a result, an urbanised, growing, young, deprived and diverse population, all factors that increase policing demand.

Underlying regional health data suggests the force will continue to experience high levels of vulnerability, underpinned by factors such as; the growth of unregulated assisted accommodation and importation of highly vulnerable groups, low educational attainment, declining public health outcomes and a younger population.

Investigative demand is increasing in both volume and complexity and the force experiences high levels of serious and complex crime. Demand also reflects a more complex and digital evidential environment. The force assess demand for services relating to protecting the vulnerable will increase significantly in the future and this increase in demand and complexity will stretch capacity inside and outside policing.

In response to the factors described, the force has been highly innovative in the development and use of technology, has made fundamental changes to focus resource against the greatest areas of threat

and has developed innovative means by which to engage and involve the communities of the West Midlands. This has driven inefficiencies and created capacity. However, in some areas such as vulnerability and serious crime, demand has increased exponentially, and complexity within that demand has become more pronounced. Welcome investment in violence reduction will enable us to build greater capability, with partners, to reduce the threat of serious violence affecting our young people.

During the next 12 months the force will commence the next phase of the change and transformation programme WMP2020. This will see WMP optimising the operating model and deploying significant new technology systems for command and control, crime, intelligence and case building whilst continuing to exploit its investment in mobility, automation, robotics, data science and analytics. Progression of the estates strategy, workforce, transport and learning strategies will build the foundations of our future capabilities.

Over the next few years the West Midlands will host several unique endeavours that require a bespoke, combined approach from WMP and partners to ensure that they are successfully delivered and any additional demand generated managed appropriately. The construction and development of HS2, Coventry City of Culture 2021 and the Commonwealth Games will all require significant resource and capabilities and the force is investing heavily in ensuring the force is prepared for these events/projects.

## **2.0 Knife Crime data**

Knife crime, including robbery, has steadily increased since the summer of 2015 and there has been an increase in the number of injuries and fatalities amongst the regions young people. The data relating to 'Knife Crime' in this report is defined by the Home Office counting rules guidance (ADR160) which include specific serious offences where a knife, blade or sharp point is used to wound, attempt to wound or threaten a victim. Knife crime offences include any instrument used as a weapon that is sharp and capable of piercing the skin. Threats are counted when the potential victim(s) are convinced they were going to be stabbed and there is evidence of the suspect's intent to create this impression. This includes a knife or sharp instrument concealed but threatened.

In the last year, homicides in WMP rose by 27% to 66 offences. In the same period, robbery increased by 11%. Nationally the increase in knife crime contributed to a rise in linked hospital admissions of 15%. The carrying of knives also increased by 28% to a level double that in 2015 and we are seeing increasing numbers of injuries and fatalities amongst young people. This is predominantly a problem impacting on young people, including school children, with 46% of both victims and offenders being under 25 years old.

While the number of firearms discharges has fallen and recoveries of firearms has remained constant, the force have seen an increase in tensions linked to organised crime. An active illicit drugs market continues to operate across the force area, this despite significant disruptions and prosecutions by WMP and partner agencies. Much of the gun and knife violence experienced can be attributed to attempts to control drug markets. Analysis supports the assertion that Urban Street Gangs are more willing to use knives to control drug markets and to threaten rival drug dealers. Some of the violence driven by this market can be directly linked to the increases experienced in respect of serious violence and homicides.

Figure 1 below, shows the knife crime over the last 24 months. Evidently there has been a continued increase with a significant spike between February 2019 and April 2019. Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the significant spike in knife crime from February to March 2019. March saw 414 recorded offences, April saw 316 and May had 319 recorded against a previous average of 312 per month. Since November 2018 33% of the offences occur in Birmingham West Neighbourhood Policing Unit (NPU) whilst 54% occur within the Birmingham boundary.

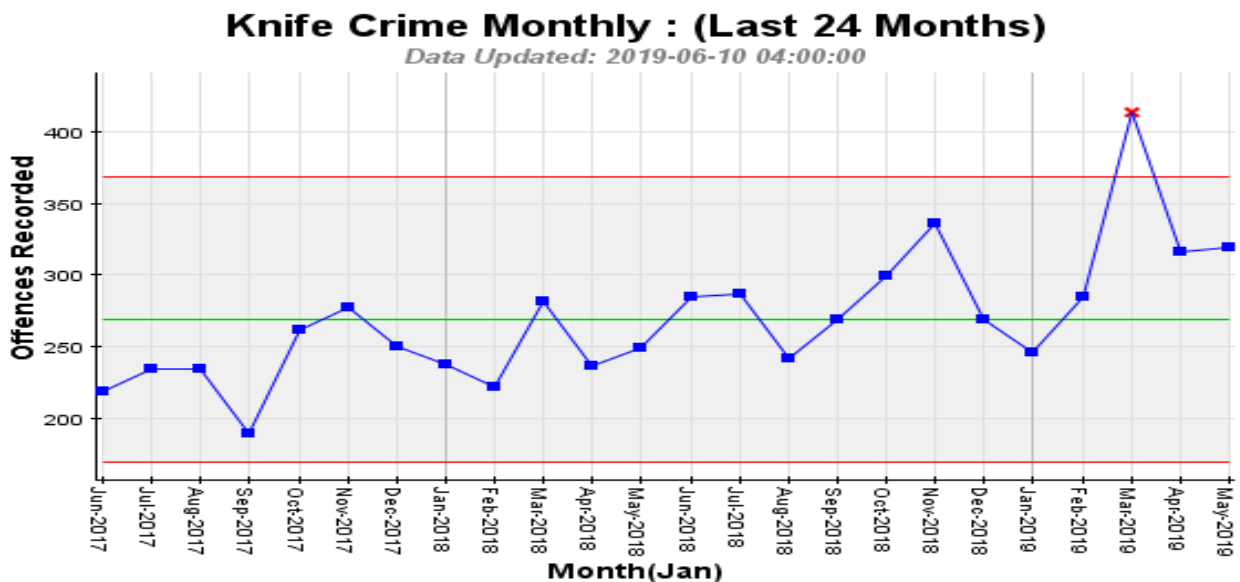


Figure 1 Knife crime over the past 24 months

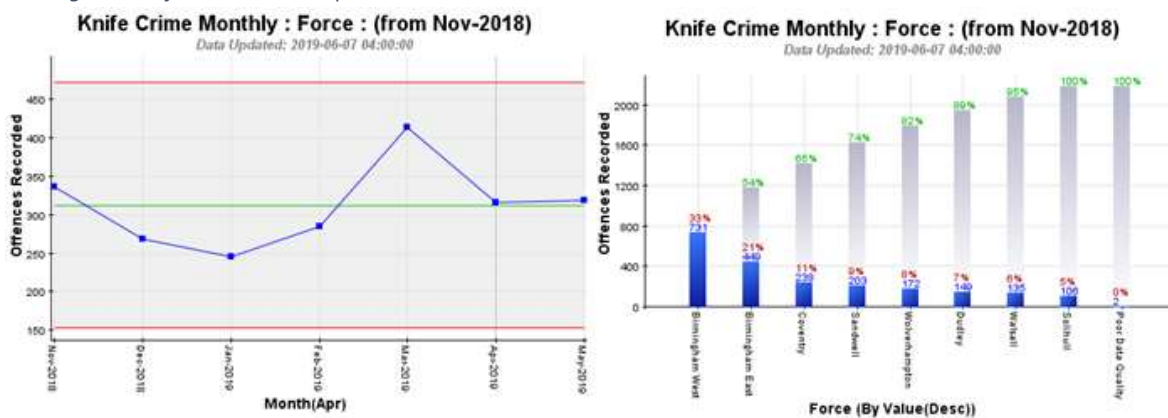


Figure 2: Knife Crime by month and by NPU location

The weapons which are being used are most commonly unknown knives or kitchen knives, with machetes only being used in 13% of all knife crime offences. This could indicate that it is more likely offenders will be more likely to use smaller, less obvious bladed articles across the WMP geography. Force wide, the weapons have been most often used as a threat, and have been used to cause injury only 19% of the time. Robbery offences have been more likely to involve the use of knives rather than violent offences force wide.

Figure 3 shows that the majority of knife crime offending has occurred in the evenings and afternoons, with some NPUs recording a large amount of knife crime occurring late at night (approx. 00:01-06:59). NPUs with a night time economy the offences peak between 17:00-01:00. Force wide knife crime is predominantly between 14:00hrs and 23:00hrs

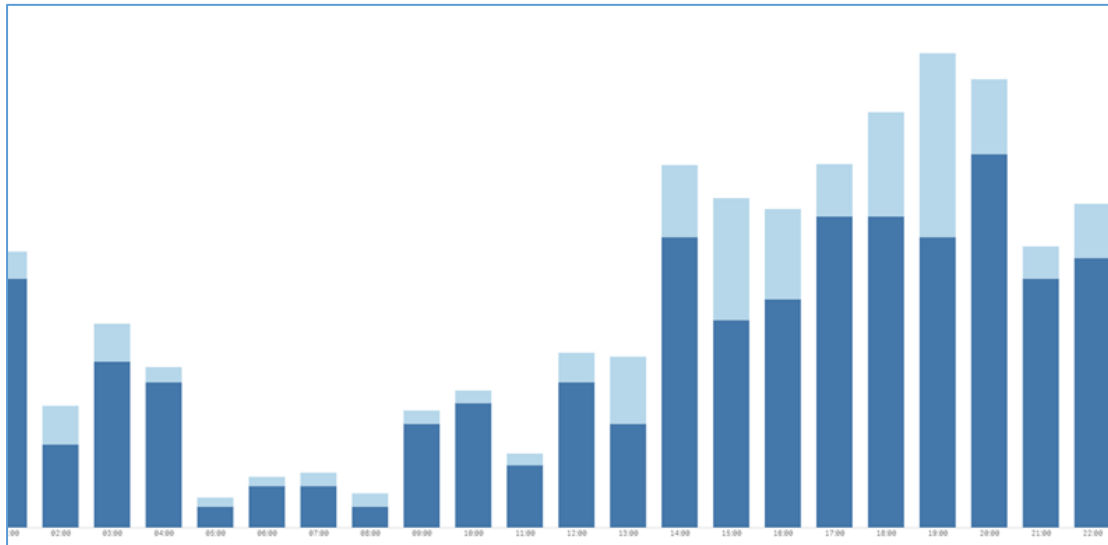


Figure 3: Knife crime by time of day

Figure 4 shows that violent offending peaks between May and July. Knife crime is included within this category. Therefore the increase in March this year was unusual.

Crime Type		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Violence	VWI	-5.5%	-14.1%	-3.8%	-2.7%	6.6%	8.6%	13.8%	-0.2%	-0.6%	1.5%	-5.5%	1.9%
	PPV / WI	-12.6%	-17.5%	-4.0%	-0.2%	9.8%	12.2%	17.3%	0.2%	2.3%	3.1%	-5.3%	-5.4%
	Domestic Violence	6.7%	-12.3%	-4.3%	-3.4%	2.6%	3.2%	7.4%	2.1%	-0.9%	1.4%	-7.0%	4.5%

Figure 4: Seasonal offending pattern for violence

The majority of knife crime offences force wide occurred in public, on roads and outside addresses. The heat map in Figure 5 shows the hotspot areas of offending (in the last 4 weeks). The NPUs most affected are Birmingham East, Birmingham West, Coventry and Wolverhampton.

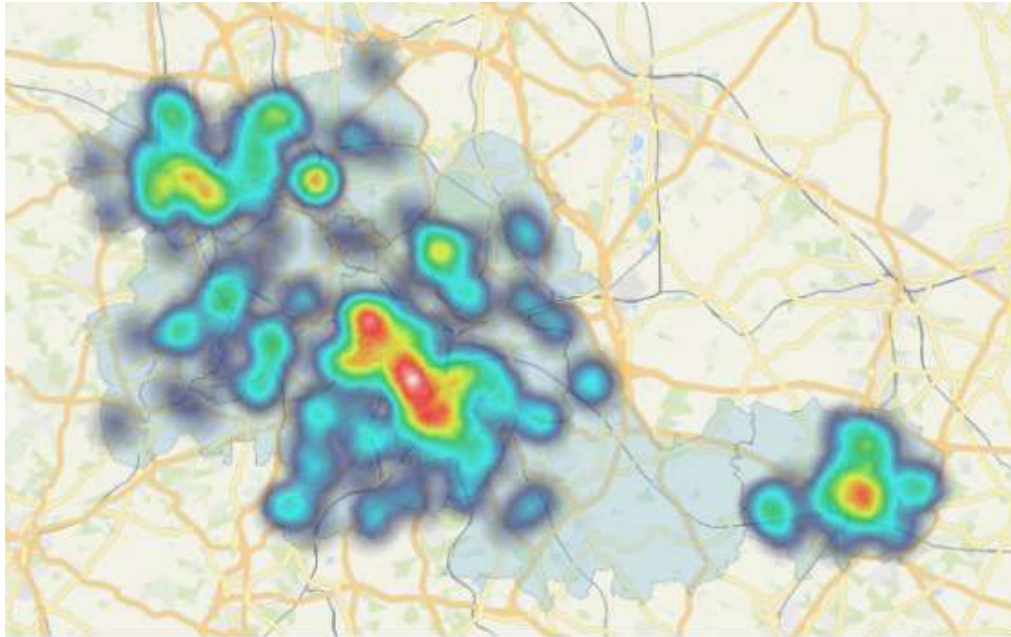


Figure 5: Hot spot locations of knife crime (last 4 weeks)

The population density map in Figure 6 shows the NPU's where knife crime is most prevalent are also the most densely populated NPU's and include the region's city centres.

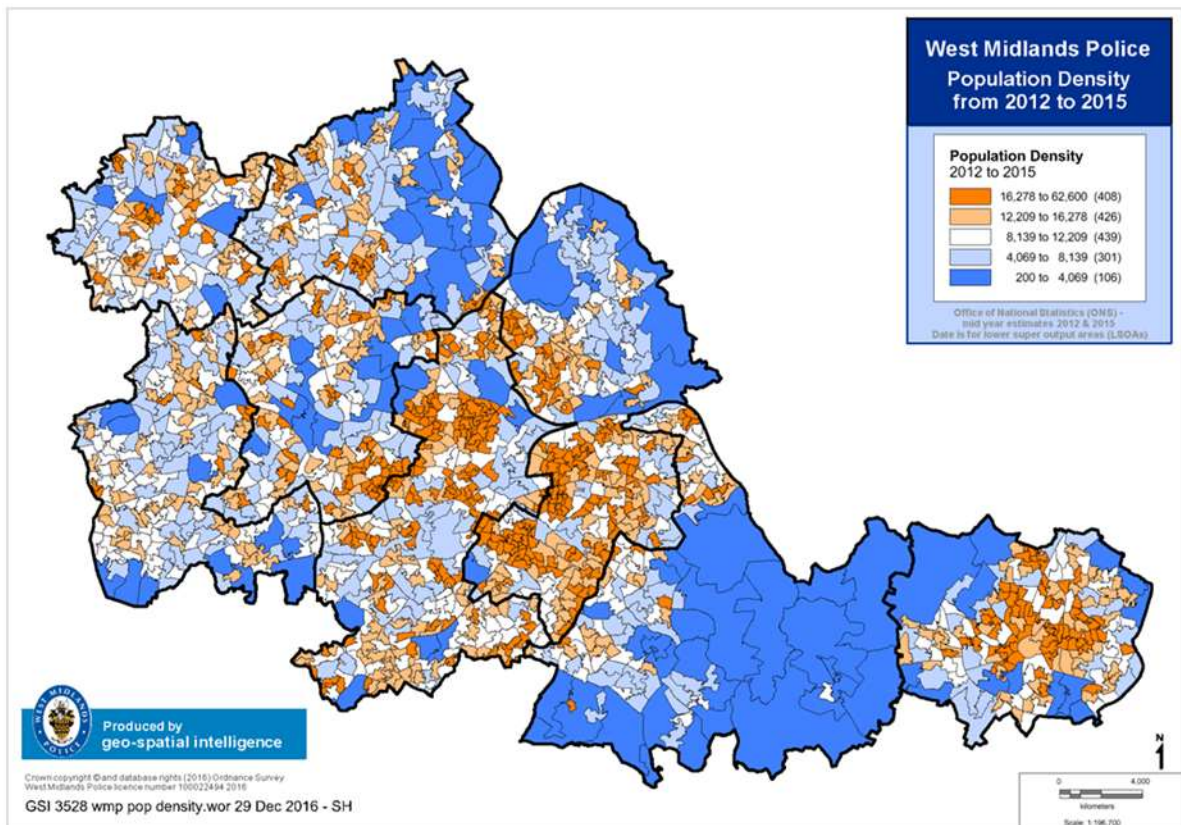


Figure 6: Population density within the West Midlands Police area

Since November 2018, 46% of victims force wide have been under 25, they have been mostly White North European (50%) followed by Asian or Asian British (21%) in ethnicity, and male (79%) in gender. Of known offenders, 47% force wide have been under 25, the majority have been White North European (49%) in ethnicity, and male (83%) in gender. The figures only represent known offenders and therefore there is an intelligence gap as this evidently isn't representative of the offenders that are not known.

Figure 7 shows the ethnic breakdown of the wider population in the West Midlands for comparison.

Census data		
White	Asian	Black
70.13%	18.82%	6.00%

Figure 7: Ethnicity of the West Midlands population (2011)

Figure 8 shows that 57% of knife crime offences against young victims (u25) occur in Birmingham.

### Knife Crime Monthly : 17 and Under + 18 to 24 \* Force : (from Nov-2018)

Data Updated: 2019-06-07 04:00:00

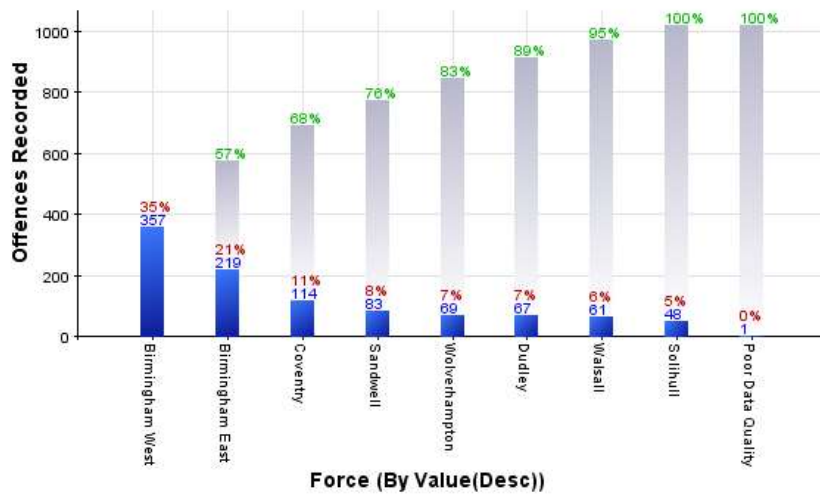


Figure 8: Knife crime victims aged under 25, by offence location NPU

Since November 2018, 49% of victims in Birmingham West NPU and Birmingham East NPU are under 25. Followed by Coventry at 48%. (SfN data)

Table 1 highlights that of knife crime 40-50% of victims are under the age of 25 across the West Midlands.

NPU	TRC Knife Crime	Victims under 25	%Proportion under 25
Birmingham West	731	357	49%
Birmingham East	449	219	49%
Coventry	238	114	48%
Sandwell	203	83	41%
Wolverhampton	172	69	40%
Dudley	149	67	45%
Walsall	135	61	45%
Solihull	106	48	45%

Table 1 knife crime victims under 25 by NPU

Figure 9 shows that since November 2018, the majority of the offenders were male (92%). The occupation of the offender was rarely completed, however 55% of occupations were recorded as 'unemployed' and 33% of occupations were recorded as 'student'.

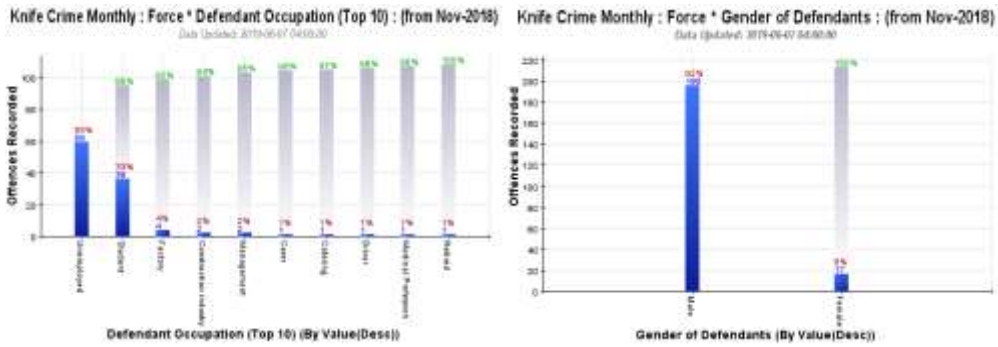


Figure 9: Occupation and gender of defendants

During the period of February 2019 and April 2019 there was a significant spike in knife related crime, also during this period there were a number of murders that involved a knife. The last knife related murder was recorded on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2019. Between 1<sup>st</sup> February 2019 and the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019 there were seven knife related murders, 5 of which occurred in Birmingham and two which were domestic. Both domestic murder victims were over 25 years and the other knife related murders were all under 25 years of age.

Figure 10 shows a 48 month period of knife related murder. During the last 12 months between June 2018 and May 2019 there have been 19 knife related murders. The previous 12 month period saw 22 knife related murders. So whilst there was a dramatic spike in knife crime between February 2019 and April 2019 the number of knife related murder has decreased.

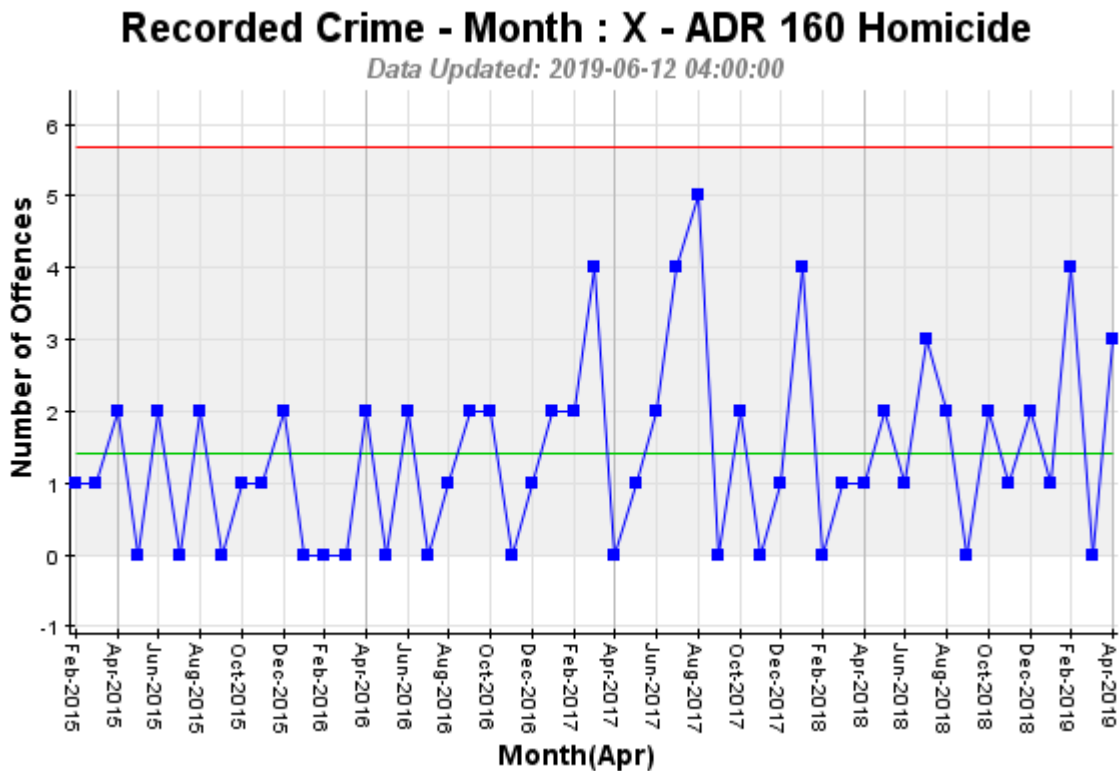


Figure 10: Knife crime Homicide



### 3.0 Drivers of knife crime

Analysis has shown that in part knife crime is driven by drug use and supply influenced by serious and organised crime. Drug abuse is a key risk factor in the Socio Ecological Model (as seen in figure 11 below) and can be seen in West Midlands Police data and intelligence with Urban Street Gangs more willing to use knives to control drug markets and to threaten rival drug dealers. Drug dependency can also be seen as driver of some aspects of knife crime in the West Midlands either directly through individuals using knives in robberies to obtain drugs or commodities that can be exchanged for drugs.

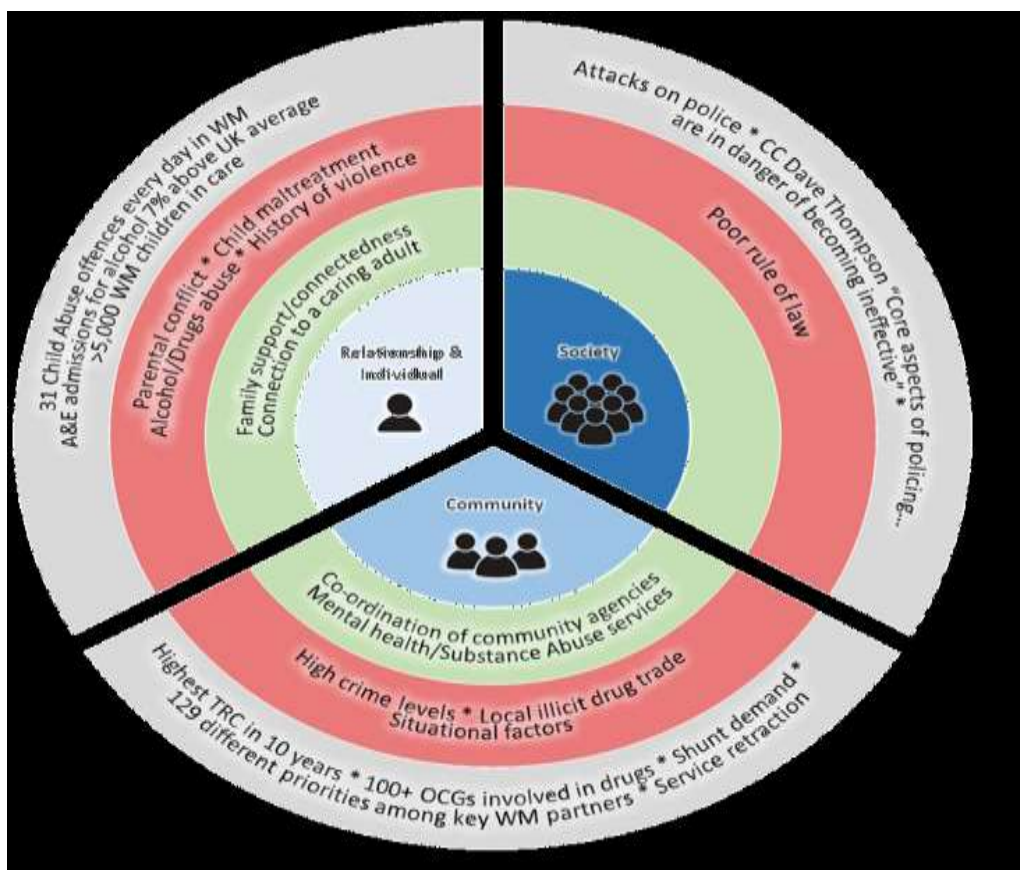


Figure 11 Socio Ecological Model

Knives appear to be the “weapon of choice” by young people who professed to carry a weapon and the ready availability of knives in the home compounds the issue further. The role of a supportive family/caring adult are important protective factors that will be missing for certain vulnerable young people when deciding whether to take a knife to school or a public place.

Being raised in an area with high levels of crime and deprivation is a known risk factor for violence. The main hotspots in West Midlands for both knife crime and robberies correlate with areas that have the highest levels of deprivation and long-standing crime and disorder issues. A recent study by Aston University, commissioned by West Midlands Police, found that while young people say they carry

weapons to protect themselves in areas they perceive to be unsafe, it is the presumption that others are armed that helps produce fear and insecurity.

The role of the media where negative stories project knives as an integral part of contemporary urban youth cultures have the effect of amplifying young people's fear in particular travelling to places where there is a perceived threat of knife crime and robberies. The study by Aston University found that the everyday feature of knives and knife crime, partly aided by the media reporting, means that certain types of crime such as robbery become popular as knives become 'trendy'. A lack of capable guardians and withdrawal of service provision in these areas are important protective factors that will be impacting on our most deprived locations.

The West Midlands Police area is experiencing high levels of all risk factors associated with knife crime and robberies and compromised protective factors – the 'safety net' of police and partner interventions is also currently severely strained due to a reduction in resources available to the police and the retraction of support services as a result of financial pressures faced by partners. Interventions which do not seek to address the wider social issues associated with young people such as, social inequality and deprivation, poor mental health and drug addiction are unlikely to provide long lasting solutions to knife crime and robberies.

#### **4.0 Government Strategy on knife crime**

The government's strategy to tackle knife crime is included within the serious violence strategy and it makes clear that the approach to tackle serious violence, including knife crime, is not solely focused on law enforcement and acknowledges that key partnerships from all sectors including the key stakeholders: education, health, social services, housing, youth services, victim services and others. It also highlights the importance of community engagement and support.

Preventing violence requires a whole system approach and whilst the serious violence strategy looks wider than law enforcement a whole system approach needs greater emphasis. There should be cross government policy to highlight the relevance for all government agencies and this should be coordinated with the third sector. A clearly coordinated strategy across government would bring a focus and raise the priority for all agencies to work together consistently over the long term in order to bring a sustained change that can reduce violence. Government lead strategy will support local arrangements and ensure tackling violence is taken as a strategic priority for all agencies.

The strategy should tackle challenges round data and information sharing. How different data sets from key stakeholders is overlaid and used needs to be better understood as does the validity for the data sets. A clear requirement round data sharing would assist in overcoming the difficulties of sharing information to inform a research and data analysis perspective and support a public health approach.

The government strategy also includes a number of different funding streams for youth intervention and violence which offers great opportunities however, the money needs to enable sustained activity over time to sustain the intervention and preventative measures to deter people away from knife crime whether that be as a victim, offender or both.

## **5.0 A Public health approach to knife crime**

Responding to violence and undertaking work to prevent it has become a critical priority, given the urgent and sustained response required to address the increases in serious violence such as violence among young people, including as knife crime.

A public health approach is pivotal in responding to knife crime because:

- Violence causes ill health through injury, fear and loss affecting individuals, families and communities
- Violence is 'contagious', with clusters of violent incidents linked by the time at which they occur, by the place they occur or by the population group they affect
- Violence affects particular groups of people unequally and contributes to health inequalities
- There are risk factors for violence which overlap risk factors for other adverse physical and mental health outcomes, and similarly there are protective factors which overlap protective factors for good physical and mental health outcomes
- It has root causes ('the causes of the causes') that can be treated, so that violence can be prevented

The underlying causes of violence need to be tackled and not just the symptoms. Over the past four years West Midlands Violence Prevention Alliance have worked across the West Midlands to establish a public health approach to preventing violence, and now is the time to build on that work to create a sustainable, at scale and coordinated approach to violence prevention.

The public health approach emphasises collective action. It has proved time and again that cooperative efforts from such diverse sectors as health, education, social services, justice and policy are necessary to solve what are usually assumed to be purely 'medical' problems. Each sector has an important role to play in addressing the problem of violence and, collectively the approaches taken by each have the potential to produce important reductions in violence. A public health approach recognises the central role of communities as co-designers in this endeavour.

### **5.1 Impacts of knife crime on the public sector**

Knife crime has impacts on many services and in particular public services including: health services, schools and emergency services.

Figure 12 highlights the profile of inpatient admissions between 2012/13-2016/17. Evidently, the overall number of admissions for assaults as decreased however, there is an increase with the number of assaults with a sharp object.

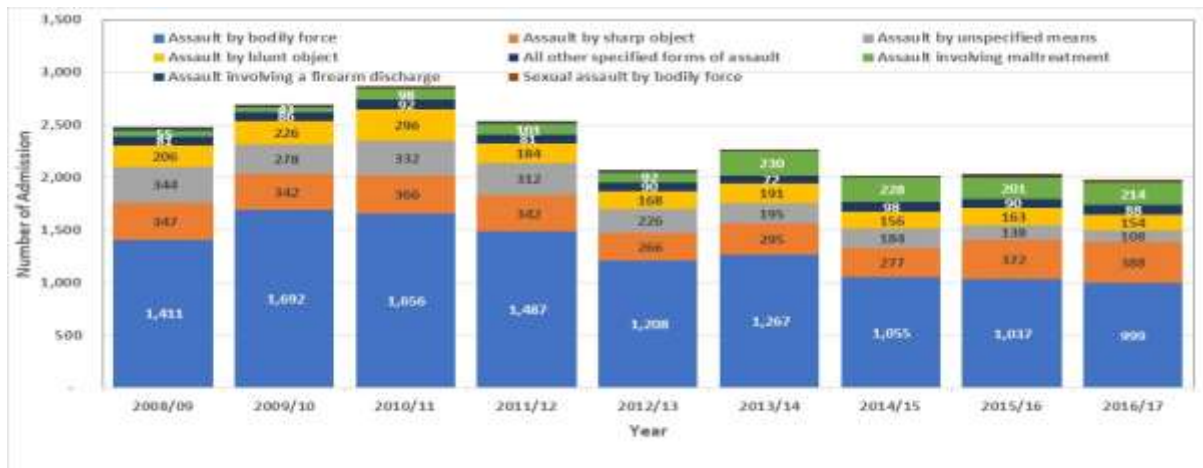


Figure 12 Profile of Inpatient Admissions, by External Cause (X85 to Y09), West Midlands Force Area, 2012/13-2016/17: Source: HES Inpatient Admissions Data

Figure 13 demonstrates the standardised assault-related attendance and admission ratios. In 2015-17, the rates of A & E attendances and inpatient admissions for assault were significantly higher in the West Midlands force area compared to England except in Coventry where A & E attendance rate was significantly lower. Within the West Midlands force area, the highest A&E attendance rate was in Sandwell and this was 66% higher than the expected rate followed by Birmingham and Walsall. This pattern was also observed with hospital admission data for assault

	A & E attendances		Inpatient admissions	
	Number	Attendance ratio	Number	Admission ratio
England	117206	100	27814	100
West Midlands	14097	114	2804	96
WM force area	8994	138	2007	131
Birmingham	4295	158	838	132
Coventry	440	49	250	119
Dudley	809	127	185	122
Sandwell	1158	166	261	158
Solihull	548	133	103	105
Walsall	912	156	132	96
Wolverhampton	832	150	238	180

	Significantly higher than the England average
	Significantly lower than the England average

Figure 13 A&E attendances following assault by location type, WMP force area, 2011/12 to 2016/17

Violence with Injury victims aged 17 and under between 2018/2019 shows the following:

- 88.7% of victims are of secondary school age
- 9% (368) of total offences have an identified defendant
- 9% (368) of total offences have an identified defendant
- The greatest proportion of defendants are aged :
  - 11 -17 years (58.2% of total offences with an identified defendant)
  - 18-29 years (17.7% of of total offences with an identified defendant)
- Offences occur between 0800 and 0000hrs seven days a week but peak Monday to Friday between 1500 and 1600 hrs

Violence with Injury offenders aged 17 and under between 2018/2019 shows the following:

- 98.9% of defendants are aged between 11 and 17 years where age was known
- The greatest proportion of victims are aged between 11 and 17 years (45.4% of total offences)
- Offences peak between 1500 and 1700hrs on Wednesday and Thursday
- Whilst violence with injury where the victim is aged 17 and under peaks after school hours, defendants of the same age grouping commit offences over a wider time period offering a less defined period for disruption

This data combined highlights:

- The most common age range for victims of knife crime is between 18 and 29 years
- There are approximately double the number of victims in this age range when compared to victims aged 11 to 17 years and 30 to 39 years
- There are similar volumes of knife crime defendants aged between 11 to 17 years and 18 to 29 years
- Offences occur 7 days a week with no specific day for offences
- Peak times for offences are between 1500 and 0200hrs
- Knife crime is not restricted to post school / education hours
- School-age victims and defendants do not account for all knife crime issues as 18 and 29 year victims and offenders are the more significant age group

## **6.0 The effectiveness of judicial sentencing in serving as a deterrent and preventing reoffending.**

Sentencing is challenging and is only partially effective. Short sentences don't generally have a positive outcome as there is a high reoffending rate and thus, they do not act as a deterrent. From an investigative perspective they can be time consuming as considerable hours can be contributed in building the evidence, the file and the criminal justice process holistically and yet most sentence are

non-custodial, community based or very short in length. Arguably, the outcome versus the effort is disproportionate and from a victim perspective creates a sense of injustice and lack of confidence in the criminal justice process and partners.

The level of rehabilitation from shorter sentences is limited and offenders have described this as 'easy time'. The failure to sentence severely enough for repeat offenders or those offenders who breach conditions or orders is concerning. This is particularly relevant for breach of civil orders where it constitutes a criminal offence e.g., gang injunctions. Longer sentences for major crime tend to have a greater impact and there is more consistency from the crown court.

Representing local context is a challenge within prosecutions and better use of Victim Personal Statements as well as Community Impact Statements needs to be implemented. This has been particularly impactful for hate crime and the impact on the communities and would be beneficial for knife crime.

In relation to young people, the starting point needs to be out of court disposals that don't criminalise. Low level convictions are seen as a badge and provide kudos and tend to promulgate gang culture. Where a child makes a mistake they should be afforded a chance to acknowledge or learn. With the current NPCC guidance on knife crime the starting point for youth offenders is a youth conditional caution. This will invariably cause them to have a label and restricts opportunity. For knife crime there needs to be a national programme and standard around low level, first time offenders. Eg. Community Resolution to undertaken national awareness course where successful completion means no prosecution.

Young people should be diverted away from further offending and given the opportunity to learn. However, once a threshold of seriousness has been reached they need to expect that tough sentencing will follow. Overall, there is still a culture of dealing with young people as offenders first rather than as a child. The CJ process is not child centred at present.

## **7.0 Young People**

The West Midlands region sees the exploitation of young people including those looked after in care, often between the ages of 15 to 17 years. This includes both local authority children and those who are in private establishments who often go missing in order to 'run a line'. Reporting suggests West Midlands missing people are often trafficked across the country in order to sell drugs to local drug users, often hundreds of miles away from their home address. Missing children also are known to sit in 'cuckooed' addresses to sell or guard drugs, which is a trend reflected nationally.

The majority of missing children do not want to engage with police when they return home and many state they have been at a friend's whilst missing and do not disclose anything further. When any debrief takes place, safeguarding measures are considered alongside any appropriate referral to a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub. Whilst it is assessed that missing children are suspected to be involved in county lines activity, the true extent of this remains a key intelligence gap and this is a trend reflected nationally.

In terms of the recruitment of these vulnerable children, whilst less understood, reporting suggests that 'exploited facilitators' are used to cross many county lines to seek out further vulnerable children, targeting schools, colleges, pupil referral units and those who have been excluded from education. This presents a challenge as the line between victim and offender becomes less distinguishable.

A tentative emerging theme suggests that children are no longer moved from the exporting area, such as within inner cities in Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Coventry, but are starting to be recruited from within the importing town, an example being Birmingham based criminals recruiting in a town in Staffordshire. This is consistent with the national trend.

### **7.1 What motivates young people to carry knives?**

Knife crime has been the subject of much attention and whilst this has become more prevalent in recent times the government has been looking at this for the past decade. With a continued focus on knife crime there is now more than an ever a need to understand what motivates young people to carry knives.

West Midlands Police supported a study in partnerships with Centre for Critical Inquiry into Society and Culture (CCISC) Aston University and Legacy West Midlands. The purpose of the paper was to study youth engagement in combating knife crime.

The study provides a review of previous reports and data and discusses the lack of reliable data that leads to assumptions about the prevalence of knife possession among young people. The Kinsella report offers a nationwide snapshot of the effects of knife crime. The report highlighted 'Fear and fashion' as two key drivers of knife crime. The shift of focus is acknowledged as it is different to usual interventions however is described as simplistic. The pilot study looks at fear and fashion by using a mixed methodology understand the fear and fashion theory and add some qualitative data to the narrative. There are some really powerful interviews and quotes including '*I can protect myself with a knife or a gun. I would rather be arrested than dead*' which emphasises that the fear of being attacked or needing protection is genuine and the rationale that they would rather be arrested than dead is so powerful and really emphasises the fear of action from others. The study highlights fear as being a reason because of the fear of crime in their daily lives. This is exacerbated by media portrayals as well as a perceived sense of their own neighbourhoods being areas where crime occurs. There is also some fear around others being armed and therefore one must arm themselves for protection. This can also impact on prestige of being known to carry a weapon or the street credibility of an individual.

The media influence, particularly on their portrayal and negative representations and narrative around knife crime in areas of high deprivation and areas described as 'guns and gangs', also impacts on place.

Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that as well as media impacting on motivators to carry a knife, social media can increase the likelihood of carrying a knife as this can increase the communication network amongst young people and there is research that suggests that gang related activity is increasingly linked to online activity. Social media platforms such as Snapchat allow messages to be sent and deleted and other platforms such as Instagram and Facebook allow for a larger reach of message which can generate new conflict or reignite old conflicts and moreover increase that fear of knife crime.

## **8.0 Prevention**

### **8.1 West Midlands Police Partnership work relating to knife crime**

There are a number of effective partnerships across the West Midlands that have been introduced in relation to knife crime and serious violence as part of the Violence Prevention Alliance, which is co-chaired by an ACC from West Midlands Police and Director of Public Health, with funding from the OPCC.

Violence Prevention Alliance; Mentoring Violence Prevention (MVP) is a secondary school peer to peer mentoring programme to draw people away from violence and develop leadership skills, confidence, social awareness and self-respect.

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Co-ordinators is a pilot currently operating in Sandwell and Dudley which focuses upon developing a trauma informed approach for public services, partners and the third sector. The aim is to facilitate and enable early support for vulnerable young people.

A programme of ACE training took place between March and May 2019 with a second wave commencing June/July 2019. There is capacity to accommodate up to 500 people across all these sessions which run from half day awareness through to three day 'train the trainer' sessions. A number of officers from WMP Force Response and Force Investigations have undertaken the 'train the trainer' sessions to go back and train colleagues within their respective departments. This will encourage officers to refer young people that they meet and encounter who may be vulnerable to violence into their respective partnership teams who can secure connectivity with the appropriate support organisation. This training also seeks to empower partners in public service and the third sector to refer vulnerable young people to support agencies.

'Teachable Moment' is an initiative that provides early support for young people affected and involved in violent crime to draw them away from violence. This involves youth workers in hospital A & E departments. The VPA co-fund and support youth workers in Birmingham QE and Heartlands A & E, in addition there are now similar programs in Coventry and Wolverhampton hospital A & E departments. There is an ambition to have teachable moments in custody blocks and to pilot different criminal justice outcomes for young people in certain circumstances where a knife is involved.

Violent crime is not a problem that affects excluded young people alone; some of the worst incidents of violence in recent times have been perpetrated by young people that have not been excluded nor shown any known previous violent tendencies at school or in the community. These young people have still made the decision to carry and use knives. Whilst it's very important that there is a coordinated partnership response from all partners to support excluded children, the wider societal issues must be tackled, and the perception that it is culturally acceptable for some young people to routinely possess and use weapons is unacceptable.

#### **Case Study: Youth of Walsall Knife Crime**

The '#Real Lives, Real Knives' campaign is an example of young people responding to the concerns of their peers in Walsall borough.

Youth of Walsall are a group of young people who provide the force with a real understanding of the issues Walsall young people face. After a poll of their peers revealed **knife crime** and personal safety were Walsall youth's top concern, the group set about tackling the problem.

They spent a long time understanding the issue, talking to knife crime victims, offenders and family members. This was followed by a successful Active Citizen's fund bid to create an awareness video. At its premiere at the PCC's Youth Crime Summit, which was received positively.

The group have since uploaded the film to You Tube and promoted its use by all youth groups, colleges and schools across the West Midlands.



## **8.2 Early Intervention Youth Fund (EYIF) & Gangs and Violence**

Through the seven Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) of the West Midlands and the Gangs and Violence Commission in Birmingham, the OPCC has commissioned a range of providers delivering diversionary activities targeted at young people and communities identified within the West Midlands 'hot spot' areas.

15 projects in Birmingham, funded by the Gangs and Violence Commission and EYIF commenced in February 2019 and a further seven projects commenced in April 2019.

Birmingham's Children's Trust, in partnership with the OPCC, has established an enhanced mentoring and diversion programme for children at risk of permanent exclusion. A number of Voluntary Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) providers have been engaged to deliver the service and referrals have are ahead of their indicative profile.

An existing mentoring project aimed at gang members and those at risk managed by Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults (SOVA), previously funded under Birmingham's Youth Promise Plus, is benefitting from EYIF support.

A programme of half term (February-March) sports activities funded through EYIF (underspend) enabled over 3000 young people to access sporting activities in the half term with many continuing to access provision up to the end of March. Many of the providers delivering these activities are committed to working with the OPCC to extend the offer beyond current funding.

Schools based activities identified by the OPCC schools partnership manager have seen a number of innovative projects supported. Further EYIF (underspend) has enabled several projects delivery in the current year.

## **9.0 Intervention**

Police stop and search powers can create opportunities to increase engagement with young people and promote safety and education on the dangers of knives. Within WMP, particularly in February, March and April 2019, there was a notable increase in the use of stop and search and in particular the use of section 60 stop and search powers.

It is understood that stop and search is a controversial tactic, and using widespread Section 60 powers has necessitated careful consideration of how to maintain public trust and perceptions of police legitimacy.

The approach in police surge operations alongside the use of stop and search' is that of 'stop and talk' 'stop and think'. Officers are encouraged to talk to young people, to identify risk factors and facilitate access to support services. Intervention and prevention is an important part with a follow-up partnership review of those interacted with during section 60 operations, to identify opportunities for referral to youth services. Close police and partnership working also considers longer term prevention, intervention tactics in response to knife crime.

Involvement of the community through joint patrolling with Streetwatch and oversight by community groups and IAG members is a continued key theme in police stop and search operations.

There is a strong focus on engagement with young people and prevention messages at schools and colleges, alongside knife arch operations in order to deter the carriage of knives. In addition, a reformed offender who has previous convictions for knife crime accompanies officers on patrol in Birmingham city centre to engage young people and talk about his experience. Close work with schools and colleges enables sharing of information on those at risk to enable early prevention.

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