



THE GOVERNMENT REPLY TO THE SEVENTH REPORT
FROM THE HOME AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
SESSION 2008-09 HC 112

Knife Crime

**Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for the Home Department
by Command of Her Majesty**

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KNIFE CRIME

Recommendation 1, 2, 3 and 13

1. Statistical data about the use of knives in violent offending are contained in the Homicide Index, the British Crime Survey and police recorded crime. Hospital Episode Statistics provide information about knife injuries resulting in a victim's admittance to hospital. The Home Office Offending, Crime and Justice Survey and MORI Youth Survey have provided information about levels of knife-carrying amongst young people. We welcome the decision to extend the British Crime Survey to under-16s and to publish specific data on knives in police recorded crime as means of improving our understanding of the scale of knife violence. However, limitations remain that inhibit a fully accurate analysis, including poor reporting rates. (Paragraph 14)
2. Between 1996 and 2005/06 fatal stabbings mirrored overall homicide rates: the number of fatal stabbings rose sharply before declining again from 2003, but the percentage of homicides that involved a sharp instrument remained relatively stable. However, since 2006 the overall homicide rate has remained relatively stable but the number of knife homicides has increased – by a dramatic 26.9% in 2006/07 – to reach 270 in 2007/08, the highest total recorded since the Homicide Index was established in 1977. (Paragraph 17)
3. It is difficult to draw firm conclusions from Home Office data about levels of knife use in non-fatal violent crime, partly because of the limitations of the source data and partly because they do not indicate many clear trends. It appears that overall knife violence recorded by the British Crime Survey fell sharply between 1995 and 2003/04, in line with overall violent crime, but rose again in 2006/07. (Paragraph 21)
13. Sensationalist media coverage of stabbings has contributed to this “arms race”. Negative media portrayals of young people as “feral youths”, when the vast majority are law-abiding, can add to a sense of being under attack. While we urge media organisations to report knife crime in a responsible manner, we also recognise the positive role that the media can play in mobilising communities against knife crime and acting as a conduit for anti-knife information and campaigns. Furthermore, responsible reporting is assisted by the provision of quality information; therefore we repeat our past recommendation for the provision of full and accurate crime data. (Paragraph 68)

The 2008/09 British Crime Survey (BCS) indicates that, among victims aged 16 years and over, the number of incidents of wounding showed a gradual rise between 1991 and 1995 and have since decreased by half (49%), since as is also the case for overall BCS violence. In 2008/09, weapons were used in about one in five (21%) incidents of violent crime as measured by survey and this proportion has remained stable over the past decade. The most common type of weapon used in BCS violent incidents was a knife (7%) and this proportion has remained at or below 8% since 1995.

Police recorded crime figures for a selection of sharp instrument related offences was, for the first time, collected in 2007. In 2008, additional offence categories were included in sharp instrument collection and this change along with a clarification in the Counting

Rules for how GBH with intent is recorded means that a direct comparison between the two years is only possible for a handful of crime types. In 2008/09 compared to 2007/08, there was a fall in the number of provisionally recorded sharp instrument related homicides (from 270 to 252). Sharp instrument related robberies fell by two per cent (17,058 to 16,701) over the equivalent period.

Key findings relating to the TKAP implementation period (July 08 to March 09) compared to the same period the previous year indicate:

- The provisional number of TKAP stop and searches increased across all ten areas following the start of TKAP and there was a (13%) reduction in the number of recorded offensive weapon offences among people aged 19 and under, compared with an increase (8%) among those aged 20 and over.
- There was no change in the number of provisionally recorded sharp-instrument related homicides among victims aged 19 and under in TKAP areas, and a slight increase among victims aged 20 and over.
- TKAP sharp-instrument ‘all violence’ offences decreased (by 17%) for victims aged 19 and under. A less marked reduction (8%) was also noted for victims aged 20 years and over.
- The number of sharp-instrument robbery offences reduced (by 13%) for victims aged 19 and under, compared with an (11%) increase in victims aged 20 years and over.
- Building on earlier reductions, there was a provisional 32 per cent decrease in admissions to hospitals for assault with a sharp object among victims aged 19 and under in English TKAP areas, compared with an 18 per cent drop in non-TKAP areas. The fall in the target age group in TKAP areas was more marked than among admissions aged 20 and over, where there was a five per cent reduction.
- In line with national sentencing guidance, provisional figures indicate that tougher penalties were being administered for possession of knives or other offensive weapons offences across England and Wales in all age groups. The average custodial sentence length for these offences also increased.

We agree with the committee that the release of accurate data will improve media reporting and the Home Office will continue to do so.

Recommendation 4

4. Hospital Episode Statistics show a big increase in knife injuries since the mid-1990s, with the sharpest increase occurring since 2006. This trend was supported by the professional opinion of two senior medical practitioners to whom we spoke. However, we note that the number of stab victims admitted to hospital is far lower than the number of stab victims suggested by the British Crime Survey. This may indicate that the majority of stab wounds are minor. The increase in hospital admissions, however, appears to indicate that serious stab wounds are becoming more common. (Paragraph 24)

Hospital Episode Statistics provide an overview of serious stabbings which resulted in a stay in hospital. Admissions to hospitals in England for assault with a sharp object increased year-on-year between 2002/03 (4,275) to 2006/07 (5,720) but have since decreased. In 2007/08, there were 5,239 admissions, an 8% decrease from the previous year with a 15 per cent decrease among 20 to 24 years olds which accounted for the largest proportion of overall drop in admissions for assault with a sharp object.

The national provisional NHS figures for March 2008 to February 2009 suggest further falls when compared to the same period the previous year. In England, there was an eight per cent decrease in admissions, among all ages, for assault with a sharp object. During Phase 1 of TKAP (July 2008 – March 2009) there was a provisional 32 per cent decrease in admissions to hospitals for assault with a sharp object among victims aged 19 and under in English TKAP areas, compared with an 18 per cent drop in non-TKAP areas during the same period the previous year. The fall in the target age group in TKAP areas was more marked than among admissions aged 20 and over, where there was a five per cent reduction.

Recommendation 5

5. The picture with regard to knife possession is complicated. The 2008 MORI Youth Survey indicated that 31% of 11-16 year olds in mainstream education and 61% of excluded young people had carried a knife at some point over the course of the previous year; however the 2006 Home Office Offending, Crime and Justice Survey found that only 3% of 10-25 year olds did. This discrepancy cannot be explained by the time lag between the surveys, as the numbers reporting carrying a knife actually decreased between the 2005 and 2008 MORI Surveys. It can partly be explained by the fact that the MORI survey includes legitimate carrying and the OCJS covers a wider age range. Anecdotal evidence indicated that in certain areas levels of knife-carrying have risen to the extent that carrying a knife has almost become “normal”. We therefore concluded that, although there is no definitive evidence of the extent of knife-carrying nationally, in parts of England and Wales it was at a level to be of significant concern. (Paragraph 30)

Since the start of the TKAP initiative local forces and the Home Office at a national level have been sending out a clear message that knife carrying is unacceptable. As a result of on-going activity, police forces tell us that there are encouraging signs that knife carrying is reducing among young people. Between June 08 and March 09, police forces in the ten original TKAP areas, supported by the Home Office with 1150 extra search arches and wands, carried out over 250,000 stop and searches for weapons (Section 1 and Section 60). Almost 5,500 offensive weapons have been seized as a result of these searches and in addition, the proportion of stop and searches in TKAP areas resulting in the recovery of a weapon halved from 4% in June 2008 to 2% or under by the first quarter of 2009.

Recommendation 6

6. The Government’s Tackling Knives Action Programme has been in operation for less than a year, therefore it is difficult to evaluate its success. It does not appear to have had a significant effect on reducing police recorded crime, although there have been signs of a notable reduction in hospital admissions in Tacking Knives Action Programme areas. (Paragraph 35)

On 22 July 2009, the Home Office Published *Research Report 19: Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) Phase 1: Overview of key trends from a monitoring programme* with a full analysis of the results of TKAP Phase 1. As the report said The relative consistency between the three trends for TKAP ‘all violence’, TKAP robbery, and NHS admissions, provides strong evidence for the robustness of the overall reduction in violent crimes shown in this age group in the TKAP areas.

The report showed that there has been a provisional 32% decrease in admissions to hospitals for assault with a sharp object among victims aged 19 and under in English TKAP areas, compared with an 18% drop in non TKAP areas for the TKAP period (July 2008 to March 2009) compared to the same period in 2007/08.

It also showed that homicides where the victim was 19 or under peaked in TKAP areas in July to September 2008 but declined in the last six months of TKAP as the effects of the programme began to be felt on the ground. In addition there was a 17% reduction in all violence with a sharp instrument offences in TKAP areas for victims aged 19 and under.

The number of sharp-instrument robbery offences reduced (by 13%) for victims aged 19 and under, compared with an (11%) increase in victims aged 20 years and over. Any death is a tragedy and we are determined to stamp out knife crime. That's why we have expanded the target age group for TKAP and why we are rolling out projects to a total of 16 police force (15 areas including the British Transport Police) to address local issues. By working together – government, police, families and communities - we can make a difference and tackle the culture that can lead to violence

Recommendation 7

7. A significant proportion of stabbings relate to brawling or domestic violence, but the rise in violent knife offences seen over the past few years is associated with street violence between groups of young people who share a territorial identity, often referred to as 'gangs'. While young people often offend in groups, there may be a tendency to overstate the phenomenon of streets gangs and a danger that categorising groups of young people in that way may glamorise street violence. Random stabbings of innocent bystanders remain extremely rare. (Paragraph 40)

We agree that there is an over use of the term 'gangs' and that random stabbings of innocent bystanders are relatively rare. We are continuing to work with national and local stakeholders to reduce this labelling of young offenders and restrict its use only to those groups of offenders who truly merit it.

However, where there are incidents of gang-related violence do occur and TKAP is providing £100k to the Association of Chief Police Officers to set up an ACPO Gang Team, which will be available to police forces and partnerships to deliver focussed advice and guidance. The team will bring together not just police but also experts with a range of frontline experience of managing gangs, for example, from local authorities and the voluntary and community sector. In addition, The Department for Communities and Local Government is starting some work on providing emergency accommodation and re-housing for young people and their families affected by gang activity.

In February the Home Secretary introduced into the Policing and Crime Bill a provision for injunctions against gang members. This new injunction will allow the police or a local authority to apply to a county court for an injunction against an individual to prevent gang related violence. This injunction will serve the purpose of preventing acts of serious violence from occurring, breaking down gang culture and providing an opportunity for local agencies to engage with gang-members and develop effective strategies for them to exit the gang.

Recommendation 8

8. Violent knife crime is concentrated in the deprived areas of large cities. The nature of knife crime may vary between cities and is not always linked to street violence. While hospital data show a rise in the number of knife injuries sustained in rural areas since the mid-1990s, the trend does not mirror the rapid rise seen in urban areas since 2006 and incidence remains considerably lower than in urban areas. While some immigrants from countries where knife-carrying is socially acceptable may be more predisposed to carry knives, knife use is not linked to ethnicity but rather reflects the local demography. (Paragraph 47)

We agree with the Committee's conclusion that serious youth violence varies between cities and has varying underlying causes depending on the local demography. That is why as part of TKAP Phase 2 we asked each of our police forces to develop a detailed analysis of the particular issues in their areas and to base their responses on those issues.

Recommendation 9

9. Males in their late teens and early twenties constitute the majority of perpetrators and victims of violent knife crime, which is consistent with other types of violent offending. However, the number of under-18s affected has risen. The age at which young people carry knives is also worrying: the incidence of carrying is highest amongst older teenagers, but we heard instances of carrying by children as young as seven. 11 seemed to be a key risk age for first carrying a knife, presumably linked to the transition from primary to secondary school. Boys are far more likely to carry a knife than girls. (Paragraph 53)

Our analysis supports TKAP's focus on young men in their late teens and early 20s and that is why we have broadened the age range targeted by the Programme to include 13 – 24 year olds. Recent local analyses provided by TKAP forces shows victimisation for serious violence peaking at age 18. Local areas are working with those within this group to manage the risk of them becoming a victim or offender of serious youth violence.

In addition, the Youth Crime Action Plan works with the 11 – 17 age group. The plan focuses on enforcement, prevention and support to families at the greatest risk of serious offending. The aim is to stop young people from being drawn into any crime including violence.

Recommendation 11

11. Hospital data analysed by the Trauma Audit Research Network indicates that the type of knife used to injure most frequently is the kitchen knife, probably because of its easy availability. However, young people tend to admit to carrying penknives, flick knives and other kinds of knives, which are also more commonly found by the police during stop and search operations. This may suggest that the knives used to cause serious injury may differ from those that are routinely carried. The MORI Youth Survey found that penknives were the most common weapon carried by young people, but to some extent this will be for legitimate purposes: only 1.2% of stab wounds recorded by TARN hospitals during the second half of 2008 were caused by penknives. (Paragraph 56)

The Home Office is working with the police, trading standards and other Government Departments to reduce the availability of knives used in serious youth violence. In the ten TKAP police force areas, over 1,700 test purchase operations for underage sales of knives have been run since June, with some indications that the failure rate is falling.

Recommendation 12

12. The vast majority of young people who carry knives say that they or their peers carry knives to protect themselves: according to one survey this reason is given by as many as 85% of knife-carriers. While for some questioned this may be an easy excuse to justify their actions, young people in deprived communities undoubtedly feel unsafe. In part this is down to the risk of being attacked simply for living in a different neighbourhood or "territory". There is also a strong link between past victimisation and knife-carrying. Many do not trust their "natural protectors", such as their parents and the police, to keep them safe. A perception that everyone else is carrying a knife fuels a vicious circle, compared by one witness to an "arms race". Solutions to knife-carrying should therefore focus in part on helping young people to feel safer. (Paragraph 67)

A great deal of money spent under TKAP has been focused on helping young people to feel safer including initiatives such as Safer Schools Partnerships, after school patrols and Operation Staysafe, to which we have contributed £3.4m in 2008/09.

The Home Office has also invested in anti-knives campaigns and education with a three-year £3 million investment in a national advertising campaign with the message ‘It doesn’t have to happen’. Viral adverts online and on mobile phones have received 13 million views. Billboards were displayed in 85 community sites across the country. The campaign has reached millions of 10 to 16 year olds with an evaluation showing that 73% of young people surveyed saying the adverts had made them less likely to carry a knife. Backed by Home Office funding, the organisation *Be Safe* are offering over 1 million young people access to workshops on the dangers of weapons over the next 5 years. Over 95,000 young people attended Be Safe classes between April 2008 and March 2009 and over 5,300 Safer Schools Partnerships now exist with dedicated police officers allocated to one or a group of schools. Knife Possession Prevention Programmes (KPPP) were piloted by Youth Offending Teams in the TKAP force areas from September 2008 for first time offenders carrying a knife. Currently the Youth Justice Board are working with Youth Offending Teams to ensure that the KPPP is developed in 85 additional YOTs in all TKAP areas to ensure that young people convicted of carrying a knife are confronted with the dangers of carrying knives. We are also providing support for parents who are concerned about their children carrying knives by providing confidential advice through parenting organisations like ‘Parentline Plus’.

Recommendation 14

14. A smaller number of knife-carriers say they carry knives to gain ‘respect’ or street credibility, or because of peer pressure. Measures to tackle weapon-carrying should therefore also focus on resolving the reasons why young people seek “respect”, including the appeal of violent street culture, and building confidence to resist peer pressure. (Paragraph 72)

We agree that measures to tackle weapon carrying should, among other approaches, look at resolving these sorts of issues. That is why we are providing £4.5 million to 150 small groups over the next three years that are working to tackle guns, gang and knife crime, through intensive work with young people through the £4.5m Community Fund. In addition, through the Youth Sector Development Fund, managed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Home Office is providing additional support to three organisations in TKAP areas working with young people. This will include working with young people to empower them to remove themselves from gang culture and prevent those who are tempted by the lifestyle from joining gangs.

Street based teams, funded through the £56.5m intensive Youth Crime Action Plan package in 69 priority areas, target those young people on the cusp of offending, which often includes young people that are on the fringes of getting involved in gangs and carrying knives. Street based teams take an assertive approach and ensure that young people receive the support they need to divert them from becoming involved in offending behaviour. Street based teams are deployed to areas where youth crime including serious youth violence is a concern.

Recommendation 15

15. We were also concerned about evidence that knife offenders are using young children as “caddies” to carry weapons for them. This is now a criminal offence under the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 attracting a maximum sentence of four years. We would like the Home Office to state the number of prosecutions made under this legislation and recommend that such prosecutions are actively pursued by the police. (Paragraph 73)

The statistics in relation to prosecutions are maintained by the Ministry of Justice. They have confirmed that the offence “Using another to look after, hide or transport a dangerous weapon - offensive weapon, knife or bladed weapon” under SS.28(1) & 29(2) of the 2006 Violent Crime Reduction Act did not come into force until 2008. Data for the calendar year 2008 should be available in November 2009.

Recommendation 16

16. A huge factor in the decision to carry a knife or use it in an offence is its easy availability. This is clearly particularly true of kitchen knives, but we heard that it is also possible to purchase illegal knives from a number of sources and that under-18s are often able to purchase knives in shops, despite changes in the law. While we believe there is value in exploring ways of decreasing supply, particularly as a solution for those who carry knives without intention to use them, this is unlikely to reduce violent offending significantly. Those intent on committing violence will find other means. Therefore, in order to address the growing trend towards serious violence in a minority of young people, it is important to address its underlying causes. (Paragraph 77)

In the ten police force areas, over 1,700 test purchase operations for underage sales of knives have been run since June, with some indications that the failure rate is falling. There are now 21 major retailers signed up to our Six Point Commitment to stop the illegal sales of knives to those under 18 – some of these, such as Asda and John Lewis have gone even further and removed knives from their online websites completely (except cutlery sets). We are continuing to examine further ways to combat the risk of underage knife sales and will encourage prosecution of those that continue to sell knives without proper age verification systems in place.

The Government is working to tackle the causes of knife crime. Where a young person has been convicted of possession of a knife, then we are working with them to challenge the acceptance of this behaviour and generate an understanding of the consequences. The knife possession prevention programme was piloted by the Youth Justice Board to ensure that young people convicted of carrying a knife are confronted with the dangers of carrying knives. It is now being rolled out to all YOTs in TKAP areas.

We are also providing support for parents who are concerned about their children carrying knives by providing confidential advice through parenting organisations like the ‘Parentline Plus’.

We are also providing more activities for children to divert them from crime. £1million funding has been provided to TKAP areas to deliver extra positive activities on Friday and Saturday nights in areas where crime and anti-social behaviour are a concern. Monitoring information from these local areas shows that to the end of March more than 14,000 young people had benefited. The Government is continuing to challenge local areas, particularly in TKAP areas to provide activities when young people and the community want and need particularly on a Friday and Saturday night. In 09/10 an additional £28 million has been provided to all local authorities through the Positive Activities for Young People with an emphasis on providing activities at these times.

In an analysis of local crime profiles for Phase 2 of TKAP, alcohol and the night time economy were flagged as drivers and locations for serious youth violence. Up to £1.4 million has been made available to the 69 YCAP priority areas to tackle alcohol fuelled youth crime and anti-social behaviour during the summer. There are 50 areas receiving the additional funding within TKAP 2 forces. Activity is focused on:

- Enforcement activity using powers to confiscate alcohol, disperse young people, use anti-social behaviour tools such as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and test purchase operations to tackle underage sales
- Early intervention and support ensuring young people have access to targeted youth support services and parents get the support they need through evidence based parenting programmes
- Communications activity to build public confidence that action is being taken and to address negative perceptions of young people

Recommendation 17

17. Individuals born into social deprivation are more likely to commit violence. Key risk factors for becoming involved in street violence include coming from a dysfunctional family with poor parental support, low self-worth, poor school attendance and living in an area where aspirations are low and there are few employment opportunities. Young people who have witnessed or experienced violence as a child are also far more prone to commit violence. We were shocked by the rapid manner in which violence can escalate between young people from a seemingly minor grievance. Extreme parental neglect halts the development of faculties that enable the majority of people to regulate their aggression. Solutions should therefore focus on dealing with dysfunctional and violent families and providing opportunities for young people to develop self-worth. However, it is important to recognise that not all young people who come from a deprived background are violent and that young people from stable backgrounds can also be violent. (Paragraph 87)

We agree it is vital to deal with poor parenting and problem families in order to reduce offending amongst young people. Family Intervention Projects (FIPs) target the small minority of high risk, challenging families who cause a disproportionate amount of crime and anti-social behaviour in their community. The projects both challenge and support problem families to address the root causes of their anti-social behaviour and make the necessary changes. FIPs deliver intensive support, supervision and challenge to whole families, co-ordinated by assertive keyworkers who use the possibility of sanctions to secure engagement.

Over the past year YCAP has set up 40 new youth crime Family Intervention Projects in England. Early evidence from key workers for the first 550 families to complete FIPs show significant impacts on family risk factors:

- Poor parenting – reduced from 64% to 29%.
- Education and learning problems (i.e. truancy, exclusion and/or bad behaviour at school) – reduced from 75% to 48%.
- Child protection – reduced from 22% at start of the intervention to 12% at the end of intervention.
- Families with one or more CJS enforcement actions – reduced from 58% to 29%.
- Domestic violence – reduced from 21% to 8%.

FIPs provide a cost effective way of tackling the problems of the most challenging families. Average costs, per year are around £14,000 per family, nominal when compared with other costs that can be incurred by these families. A study by the Department for Communities and Local Government (*'Anti-social Behaviour Intensive Family Support Projects: An evaluation of six pioneering projects'*) for example, estimated the costs to the taxpayer of anti-social behaviour committed by problem families as being between £250,000 and £350,000 per family per year.

Commitments in *YCAP One Year On* build on this progress ensuring more consistent support for families who need it, through more assertive working with parents using formal tools and powers if necessary and identifying families at the earliest possible opportunity. This will be achieved in part through continuing central support and through £6m from the Department of Health to strengthen the health contribution to the projects. In the Autumn, Government will publish plans for improving early intervention by local services to tackle a whole range of problems for those children and families who need extra support, including through new legislation.

Recommendation 18 and 43

18. Evidence to our inquiry supported our view that violent DVDs and video games exert a negative influence on those who watch and play them. Watching or playing such media contributes around 10% of any person's predisposition to be violent. Of particular concern is their influence on individuals who are already predisposed to violence because they grew up in a violent environment. (Paragraph 88)

43. We were disturbed to learn that young offenders who are convicted for violent offences are allowed to watch violent DVD and video games in secure units and young offending institutions, given that they may increase the risk of violent behaviour in those already predisposed to violence. We recommend that the Ministry of Justice should institute a ban on this kind of material. (Paragraph 194)

Young people under the age of 18 years within the secure estate have never been allowed to access such games. All films and console games in the under-18 secure estate are age appropriate meaning that no 18-rated games such as Grand Theft Auto are permitted anywhere in the estate. Most establishments also carry out screening of all films and games for appropriateness of content prior to distribution to young people. The Youth Justice Board is currently reviewing guidance to establishments in the under-18 secure estate in order to ensure consistency.

We agree that violent video games and DVDs should also not be available in the over-18 estate, that is why in September 2008, NOMS issued a Prison Service Instruction which removed access to 18-rated console games. The implementation of the PSI was completed by the end of September 2008.

Recommendation 19

19. The laws regulating the sale, possession and use of different kinds of knives are contained in a number of different pieces of legislation. We note calls from the Police Federation to simplify this legislation; however we consider this would be overly resource-intensive. We understand that the Association of Chief Police Officers is in the process of clarifying the provision of relevant legislation into a definite piece of guidance for use by police officers. We welcome this and urge its speedy publication. Our inquiry did not find any need for further legislation to tackle the sale or use of knives. (Paragraph 93)

The Government is working with the Association of Chief Police Officers to assess the need for such a document. If such a document is needed we will work with all relevant stakeholders during its production.

Recommendation 20

20. There appears to be a need for better enforcement of current legislation regarding the sale of knives. The voluntary charter initiated by the Safer Southwark Partnership with retailers in the London borough appears to have been successful in reducing underage knife sales. We therefore support the Government's similar national campaign with retailers. We also support efforts to design a kitchen knife with a shorter point, although note that it would take a number of years to achieve a big reduction in the number of traditional kitchen knives in circulation unless there was an incentive for people to replace their current knives. (Paragraph 97)

We share concerns about the sales of age restricted products to those who are underage, which is why, since June 2008 TKAP has encouraged and worked with a number of trading standards departments to challenge retailers who sell knives. We have welcomed the positive engagement we have had from trading standards departments, which has enabled us to send a clear signal to retailer that selling knives to young people under the age of 18 are not acceptable. Overall we saw underage sales of knives within test purchase operations reduce during the first phase of the programme from around 30% of sales in TKAP areas at the start of the programme to 16% towards the end (March 2009). Through TKAP, we have also worked with retailers and the British Retail Consortium to develop a 6 point commitment. To date 21 major retailers have signed up. A particular concern has been online retail sales and we are delighted that the majority of these major retailers have now removed online sales of knives from their websites.

Despite this, online sales of knives to children remains a particular concern, with a number of trading standards operations identifying unacceptable levels of underage online sales of knives.

- As part of our ongoing enforcement work with the 10 TKAP forces, we have provided £100k to support Trading Standards colleagues in the prosecution of retailers who continue to sell knives to under 18s.
- We are continuing to examine further ways to combat the risk of online underage knife sales and will encourage prosecution of those that continue to sell knives without proper age verification systems in place.

Trials of the “safer kitchen knife” have been encouraging. The Design and Technology Alliance and the designer are working with manufacturers and retailers to help bring the “safer kitchen knife” to market. A range of safer kitchen knives will be introduced in stores in the Autumn.

Recommendation 21

21. Knife amnesties have a limited impact on crime levels and are unlikely to dissuade persistent offenders from carrying knives. We have no objection to their continued use as part of a broader set of initiatives aimed at reducing knife-carrying, but policy-makers should understand their limited value. (Paragraph 100)

We recognise that amnesties have their limitations and have not promoted them centrally through the Tackling Knives Action Programme. We do, however, believe that their selective use can have value in individual communities, and we therefore do not discourage their use on police advice in particular cases.

Recommendations 22 and 31

22. Stop and search operations are a key component of the Tackling Knives Action Programme. In London they have yielded only a 2% return in knives seized. However, the extent of any deterrent effect is unclear. Moreover, the British Transport Police claimed that their stop and search operation, SHIELD, has contributed to a 39% reduction in the number of crimes where knives are involved since its introduction in 2006. We heard conflicting views from communities affected by knife crime about the impact of stop and search: some pointed to the potential damage to police/community relations; others considered it an important measure to keep their children safe. Police representatives emphasised that their approach combined enforcement with prevention. We concluded that stop and search is an important short-term measure to tackle knife offences, with the caveat that it is carried out in an appropriate and sensitive manner. (Paragraph 108)

31. However for some of these young people this attitude stems from a negative personal experience, particularly of stop and search. We cannot emphasise enough how crucial it is for stop and search to be carried out in an appropriate and sensitive manner. We also urge support for schemes that break down the barriers between police officer and young people, such as Safer Schools Partnerships and those that see police officers acting as mentors to young people. (Paragraph 148)

Stop and search powers are a vital tool for police officers in preventing, detecting and reducing crime, whether it is street robbery, knife or gun-crime or terrorism.

The key to effective and fair use of stop and search is that it should be used in a targeted, intelligence-led way and based on accurate, up-to-date intelligence. Police officers must have the confidence to use these powers and by doing so effectively, help enhance confidence amongst all members of the community that they are being used to tackle crime and disrupt offenders.

Engaging with communities on the use of stop and search not only helps raise their understanding of why the power is being used and what it can contribute to neighbourhood safety; but also sends out a strong message to those who chose to carry knives that the police and the community are working together to reduce crime and violent behaviour.

We have provided strong support for Safer Schools Partnerships and there are now over 5000 in place across England and Wales.

Recommendations 23, 24 and 25

23. The Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 increased the maximum sentence for knife possession to four years. In our Report on Policing in the 21st Century, we expressed concern that advice published by the Sentencing Guidelines Council in June 2008 that punishment for knife possession could begin at a Band C fine was too lenient. We are therefore pleased that new guidance sets a starting sentence point of a 12-week custodial sentence. (Paragraph 112)

24. While we consider that magistrates should be allowed a degree of discretion when sentencing those convicted of knife possession, and therefore oppose a mandatory sentence, we favour a more consistent approach to sentencing and custody for the majority of offenders. We are therefore pleased to note that there is now a presumption across England and Wales that knife-carriers will be charged, and that the number of offences resulting in custody rose during 2008. (Paragraph 117)

25. While it may be an appropriate punishment for knife-carriers, evidence suggests that the prospect of a custodial sentence may not deter young people from carrying knives. Many young people do not think about the consequences of their actions, and for a small minority who feel at risk of violence, the prospect of jail seems preferable to the dangers of being caught without a weapon for protection. Evidence suggests that the fear of getting caught acts as a stronger deterrent for young people. This strengthens our support for strong police action against knives, including the use of stop and search. (Paragraph 123)

The Government welcomes the Home Affairs Committee's support of our sentencing policy and the use of stop and search to tackle knife crime. During Phase 1 of the Tackling Knives Action Programme, there was a 44% increase (about 260 prisoners) in the number of prisoners serving a sentence for possession of an offensive weapon in the period January to March 2009 compared to the same period, pre-TKAP in 2008.

The average length of a custodial sentence for knife and offensive weapon possession increased by 33% for adults over the TKAP period compared to the same period in 2007/08 and by 20% for juveniles.

Recommendation 26

26. We support the aims of the Government's anti-knife media campaign and we believe it has had some impact on making young people think twice before carrying a knife. However, we are concerned that such campaigns may not reach the most at-risk young people and fail to engage with the realities of street violence. Evidence shows that children are most likely to be influenced by "real" stories, particularly the experiences of former offenders and the families of knife victims. We recommend that all Year Seven school children should participate in an assembly or lesson, delivered by trained individuals to whom children can relate, that focuses on the dangers of knife-carrying and the consequences for victims, their families and offenders. We consider that the short film made by the UNCUT Project provides a particularly powerful means of communicating with pupils about the realities of knife violence. In order to engage children effectively, the programme should be adapted to the local context, along the lines of the Leeds Weapons Awareness Programme. (Paragraph 134)

The Home Office will be continuing with its national anti-knife campaign during Phase 2 of TKAP, spending £2 million on a new phase of the "*It Doesn't Have to Happen*" national advertising campaign with the message – "*Carry a Knife, Lose your Life*". The campaign will launch in October and will include TV ads, a web campaign and outdoor posters, including in washrooms at youth clubs and leisure centres often frequented by young people.

The Personal Health and Social Education curriculum in schools aims to help all pupils to develop the social and emotional skills needed to enable them to manage their feelings, to manage conflict and to respect one another. Pupils are taught to recognise risk and make safer choices and to recognise also when pressure from others threatens their personal safety. It is an underlying principle of PHSE teaching that it should be age and location appropriate (for example, knife crime lessons will not be appropriate for the majority of children who live in areas with low levels of knife crime). Although we are committed to expanding knife awareness education and have committed to reaching one million young people over the next 5 years. We do not agree that a mandatory knife crime lesson should necessarily be provided to every child. Where necessary PHSE covers this type of topic.

Recommendation 27

27. The installation of knife detectors can help to reassure pupils and their families that a school is taking firm steps to protect them from potential knife violence. However, they may not be appropriate for every school and also have the potential to make some pupils more fearful. It is also debatable whether they are necessary; a University of Portsmouth study found that pupils feel safer and are less likely to carry knives at school than they are in other environments. We therefore do not recommend compulsory introduction of knife detectors in schools; rather each school community should make the decision for themselves. (Paragraph 138)

The possible use of screening arches – in schools and other places – is one of a range of measures that can be used locally to tackle knife crime, as part of the Tackling Knives Action Programme.

A number of schools have been equipped with screening wands, though indications are that most are not yet using them on any regular basis. The Department for Children Schools and Families' guidance makes it clear that they have the power to screen pupils at random. It is not considered that screening arches are appropriate for any but a very small number of schools – and searching and screening pupils will continue to be at the discretion of individual schools, working closely with the police.

Recommendation 28

28. Taking a knife onto school premises is a serious transgression and should be dealt with accordingly. In such cases, many would argue that the child should be excluded for the benefit of the wider school community and we do not seek to remove the discretion of school leaders to make such decisions. However, we continue to be concerned about the increased likelihood of excluded children to go on to offend. For this reason, exclusion should automatically constitute the point of serious intervention by the relevant authority to put in place the kind of diversions we explore in our final chapters. (Paragraph 141)

We agree that it is important to work with excluded children. That is why, as part of the Youth Crime Action Plan, local authorities assess every pupil's needs, using the Common Assessment Framework, following permanent exclusion. This assessment of needs can lead to a wide range of appropriate interventions possibly including, but not limited to, diversionary activities.

Recommendation 29

29. Safer Schools Partnerships, whereby police officers are attached to a school or group of schools, appear to be an effective way of keeping children safer. We heard evidence of how they can help to reduce conflict between pupils and generate intelligence about conflicts that have the potential to spill over outside school. However, we note concerns expressed by the National Audit Office about a lack of evaluation of the different models in existence. We recommend that the Government should carry out such an evaluation with the aim of spreading best practice and ensuring the participation of all schools that would benefit from involvement in such a partnership. (Paragraph 144)

We are pleased that the HASC recognises the value of Safer School Partnerships. This chimes with the feedback we get from the police, schools and young people themselves, which is why we want SSPs to be the norm rather than the exception.

An evaluation of SSPs by the University of York in 2005, it found that -

- Pupils in SSP schools felt safer than their counterparts in comparison schools, something that would not be predicted from the characteristics of the schools.
- There were signs that a smaller proportion of pupils at the intervention schools were falling victim to crimes at school.
- Absence rates in SSP schools fell significantly, relative to the corresponding rates in comparison schools.

We are not persuaded of the merits of undertaking a further evaluation of SSPs. There are a range of different models, which will suit different schools in different circumstances. Our guidance suggests that SSPs are resourced according to need – so a school experiencing a lot of problems could have a full time police officer based there, while other schools could receive visits from their SSP officer on a regular basis.

Recommendations 30 and 33

30. Outside the school environment, young people should feel they can rely on the police to keep them safe. However a minority of young people view the police as an enemy, rather than an ally, and this minority increases as children progress through their teens. Some of these young people share the fears of some adults that the police will not respond when needed and in this respect our previous recommendations on improving public confidence in the police are pertinent. (Paragraph 148)

33. We hope that measures to improve the relationship between young people and the police will encourage higher levels of crime reporting and that when these young people do come forward, they are given the counselling that they need. (Paragraph 150)

We agree that young people should feel able to share their fears with the police and there are now over 5,000 Safer Schools Partnerships in place. Having a dedicated police officer on hand to develop a close relationship with a school has the dual benefit of helping to tackle pupil behaviour or attendance issues as well as building trust and positive relations between the police and young people. It encourages greater confidence in the police by making them more visible and accessible and provides young people with a valuable role model.

As part of YCAP, the 69 local authorities where the problem of youth crime is greatest have started to deliver an intensive programme of activities tailored to their local needs. This includes after school patrols, which provide increased visible police patrols during after-school hours on bus routes and transport hubs, to tackle anti-social behaviour and disorder at school closing time and to reassure parents and pupils. From November 2008 to June 2009:

- 15292 after school patrols have taken place
- 1632 schools have been covered by patrols
- 64017 young people have been engaged during patrols
- 2497 referrals to other services have been made

We agree that it is vital that young people feel confident to report crime. When a young person does come forward to the police, the standard of service they should receive is set out in the Witness Charter. The Charter includes new standards of care for victim and non-victim prosecution witnesses and defence witnesses. The Charter provides greater clarity about the services and level of care they should receive from point of report including being kept informed, to have their needs catered for, to be safe and comfortable at court and to feel that their contribution is valued.

Increasing public confidence more generally in crime fighting agencies is vitally important if crime is to be tackled effectively and the public are to feel safer. This is why the Home Office has set a new single target for police forces and authorities - to increase public confidence that the police are tackling the crime and anti social behaviour issues that matter locally. This has now replaced all top-down numerical targets on individual police forces.

We are already seeing improvements, with the latest British Crime Survey (BCS) figures released in July 09 show an encouraging trend that, nationally, 49% of the public now think that the anti-social behaviour and crime issues that matter locally are being dealt with (up from the baseline of 45%).

All members of the public, including young people have the right to receive a high standard of service from the police. This is detailed in the Policing Pledge which has been adopted by all 43 forces in England & Wales. The Pledge sets out 10 service commitments which are standard for all Police Forces in England and Wales including response times, regular public meetings to agree local priorities and the right to regular updates for victims.

Recommendation 32

32. Given the correlation between being a victim of violence and carrying a weapon, providing support for assault victims is key. (Paragraph 150)

Over the past year the Youth Crime Action Plan has tested innovative ways of supporting young victims in five pilot areas (Derby, Lambeth, Norfolk, Lewisham and Oxfordshire) to build our knowledge of how best to deliver services for young victims of crime. The pilots have been completed and have provided support to over 12,500 young people through school assemblies, workshops telling them about the dangers and consequences of crime, how to keep safe and how to get help if they need it. The pilot areas have now developed pledges stating how they will support young people at each stage of victimisation. These pledges will guide other areas as they roll out similar services.

The Government continues to work to prevent young people becoming victims by designing out crime. We have worked with partners to develop innovative design solutions to help prevent youth victimisation. The Sorrell Foundation presented its findings on how design can be used to keep young people safe, focusing on design of schools and routes to school. Building on these findings, young people will brief the Metropolitan police. We are also working with the mobile phone and banking industries on principles to safeguard against crime. As young people are disproportionately the victims of mobile phone crime, stronger safeguards will make them safer and less likely to be an increased target for criminality and a victim of crime.

In addition to preventing future victimisation we are working with those young people who have already been victims of crime. The Government has provided support for those who need it, including one-to-one sessions, activity breaks to share experiences and referring young victims to existing local activities that will re-build self esteem. Over 400 young victims have been supported. In addition, we have improved the support for young witnesses by publishing guidance for practitioners on how to set up support schemes for young witnesses. A young person version of the Victims of Crime leaflet has been developed for those young people who report a crime to the police. This will provide information on what will happen next with regards to the police process and going to court, their rights under the code of practice and information regarding support services.

In order to measure our performance, the British Crime Survey (BCS) has been extended to include 10 to 15 year olds for the first time. This will provide national data on how well we are preventing victimisation and supporting young victims of crime and will establish a baseline for our national goal to substantially reduce youth victimisation by 2020.

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime sets out the services that victims can expect from the criminal justice system. Victims under 17 are automatically considered to be vulnerable and therefore entitled to an enhanced service. In the youth justice system YOTs contact victims to ask if they want to be involved in restorative justice, in appropriate cases. Young witnesses will be considered for special measures in court, such as screens, TV links or intermediaries to help young witnesses give their best evidence.

The Home Office is building on this success over the next year through new projects to ensure that more young people are aware that they are entitled to support and that they get support when they need it. We will measure youth victimisation more accurately as a first step towards establishing a national goal to reduce it.

This will be achieved by developing a National Offer for Young Victims which will be underpinned by £500,000 of new investment. Best practice will be shared with the YCAP priority areas so that more areas follow in the footsteps of the five pioneering areas and give more young people the support they deserve. We are auditing the Youth Crime Action Plan priority areas to assess the existing provisions, the gaps and the support that local areas will need to do more. Alongside the audit, additional funding will be distributed to the priority areas and support will be provided through the Youth Taskforce to implement young victims work and to make local pledges.

Recommendation 34

34. While we advocate the use of custody for violent knife offenders and some knife possessors, we are concerned about high re-offending rates among both adult prisoners and young offenders. Reducing re-offending is key to tackling violent crime in the long-term. There is currently insufficient work in prisons and young offender institutions to address offending behaviour. Young offenders in particular are likely to be impulsive and not consider the consequences of their actions; evaluations of cognitive behavioural programmes, such as Enhanced Thinking Skills, appear to show positive results. We recommend that the Ministry of Justice should expand provision so that more prisoners and young offenders who are judged likely to benefit can participate in such programmes. (Paragraph 161)

There is no single cause of knife crime. Offenders will present very different offending behaviours and motivation and will have a diverse range of needs. Effective interventions need to match treatment to risk, needs and engagement factors. Existing programmes therefore address a broad range of factors associated with violent offending however perpetrated.

NOMS delivers a range of accredited offending behaviour programmes to address violence covering thinking skills, anger management, domestic and other types of violent crime as well as programmes to address for example sexual offending. It is also delivering other activities across prison and probation such as training, education, work, non accredited courses, specialist support and resettlement that have a significant part to play.

Responsibility for the commissioning of services including offending behaviour programmes now rests with the regional Directors of Offender Management. It is for them to commission services that meet the needs of offenders and the requirements of sentencers in their area.

NOMS is undertaking a range of work to support commissioning in relation to interventions including:

- A census of non accredited programmes delivered in custody and the community. Following the census there will be a programme of work which will assess the benefits of certain interventions in terms of reforming offenders and potential gaps . This may pick up some initiatives around knife crime.
- A review of the suite of programmes delivered by NOMS is underway.
- A review of violence programmes has been discussed with the Correctional Services Accreditation Panel and will help inform future developments and work in this area.
- NOMS will take forward learning from the Knife Possession Prevention Programmes (now re branded as the Knife Crime Prevention Programme) being piloted and delivered to young people in the community
- NOMS is producing recommendations for good practice and interventions with gang related offenders following a joint project with the Met

Recommendation 35

35. We heard anecdotally that the Knife Possession Prevention Programme run for all young people convicted of knife possession in Tackling Knives Action Programme areas has had a positive influence on their behaviour. We recommend that an evaluation is carried out to measure re-offending rates and, if judged to be a success, long-term funding for the programme is made available. (Paragraph 162)

The Youth Justice Board has run a process and implementation evaluation on the 12 KPPPs in the pilot. This is positive, backing up comments in the report that the most effective modules are those that focus on victim experience and the medical consequences of knife violence. A full scale impact evaluation is currently being discussed with the Home Office.

As part of Phase 2 of TKAP, the KPPP programme will be rebranded as the Knife Crime Prevention Programme and will available to any young person convicted of any offence where a knife, or the threat of a knife is a feature. The Knife Crime Prevention Programmes (KCPP) will be rolled out to all Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) within TKAP areas; an additional 85 YOTs are to go live by end Sept 09 bringing the total number of participating YOTs to 97.

Recommendation 36

36. Improving literacy and skills can also reduce the likelihood of re-offending. More than half of prisoners leave school with no qualifications, and a third with literacy skills at the same level as or below those expected for an 11 year old child. We commend those private companies, such as Timpsons, National Grid Transco, Cisco, Panduit and Bovis Lend Lease and Travis Perkins, who are working with prisons to improve the employment prospects of prisoners. The Government should consider offering incentives for more companies to become involved in such partnerships. A Ministry of Justice study found that odds of re-offending increased by 43% for prisoners reporting both employment and accommodation problems on release. We therefore also advocate increased resettlement support targeted at prisoners who have demonstrated in prison they are unlikely to re-offend. (Paragraph 163)

The Government set out its intention to increase the number of partnerships with the private sector to increase the range of constructive work and / or training available inside prison in the Prison Policy Update paper published in January 2008. Activities in this area continue to grow and examples include the Timpson's Academy in HMP Liverpool, Travis Perkins at HMP Stocken and the employment of some 500 prisoners working in DHL managed workshops.

This is part of a wider package of measures aimed at increasing offender employability, which is delivered in partnership between the Ministry of Justice, and the Departments for Business, Innovation and Skills, and Work and Pensions. This package will be further strengthened by the National Offender Management Service's recent approval for Co-Financing Organisation status to spend an additional £50m of ESF money on specialist employment case workers to aid in resettlement work, in custody and in the community.

Commencing in the autumn, organisations that are contracted to deliver this service will be expected to focus on those offenders who have a high risk of re-offending. Delivery of this specialist employment case worker approach will have a strong focus on short term offenders with an emphasis on structured support after release and case co-ordination to deliver offenders into mainstream employment and skills provision. This is in line with the Ministry of Justice's proposed strategy to focus resources on offenders at the highest risk of re-offending and harm, some of whom are currently not covered by the offender management model and whose needs may not be picked up by mainstream skills and employment programme providers.

Recommendation 37

37. We were impressed with innovative gang exit and violence reduction strategies employed in Strathclyde and the West Midlands, which use different methods but share a multi-agency approach and replicate good practice from the United States and Northern Ireland respectively. We believe that local partnerships are best placed to develop solutions tailored to the needs of their communities, but recommend the establishment of a cross-departmental unit at Government level, along the lines of the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit, whose role is to oversee the work of partnerships in this area and spread good practice. (Paragraph 171)

We agree with the emphasis on the need for multi-agency approach taken in Scotland and on the need for cross-cutting Departmental working. That is exactly the approach used with the Tackling Gangs Action Programme (TGAP) and the Tackling Knives Action Programme – which have already brought together a team in the Home Office made up of staff from key Government Departments, the police, local authorities and regional government offices. Teams work closely with agencies in targeted cities to drive joint working to deliver tough enforcement, support for young people to stop violent behaviour and strong risk management for those who pose a risk to the public.

The Youth Crime Action Plan, alongside the Tackling Knives Action Programme and Tackling Gangs Action Programme have now established well developed processes for engaging across Whitehall and at a local level.

Within the Home Office a weekly Tackling Knives Action Plan meeting is held, chaired by the Minister of state for policing, crime and security. National and local stakeholders from across government are invited to this meeting to update on progress made in their area and to share best practice.

We also agree that multi-agency working to tackle gang violence is key at a local level and that is why TKAP is providing £100k to the Association of Chief Police Officers to set up a team of experts to be made available to police forces and/or partnerships to deliver focussed advice and guidance. The gang team will be available to all local areas who seek their support where that area has encountered gang problems.

The team is innovative in that it will bring together not just police but also experts with a range of frontline experience of managing gangs together, for example, from local authorities and the voluntary and community sector.

Recommendation 38

38. Witnesses told us that Youth Inclusion Programmes are helping the young people who are most at risk of offending or school exclusion in deprived communities to stay out of trouble. About half of teenagers “grow out” of crime, but an evaluation showed that arrest rates for those who had engaged with a YIP decreased by a further 10%. We were also impressed by the comparatively low costs involved. We therefore recommend that the Government continues to fund Youth Inclusion Programmes as a means of reducing youth crime. (Paragraph 176)

The Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Home Office will be funding the Youth Justice Board through the current CSR period 09-11 (£24m/£21m/£21m). A proportion of this funding will be used for YIPs, thereby securing their immediate future.

Recommendation 39

39. Homicide and wounding cost society millions of pounds a year. The organisation Kids Count has roughly estimated that knife-enabled crime costs £1.25 billion a year. We heard convincing evidence of the long-term cost benefits of applying a public health approach to violence reduction, as well as the benefits to individuals and communities. A public health approach treats violence as a disease and invests resources in prevention. (Paragraph 180)

The refreshed Tackling Violence Action Plan agreed by the National Violence Task Force also seeks to strengthen our work in key strategic areas supported by 45 new cross-governmental actions. This includes work on prevention and a new focus on violence as a public health priority. This plan sets out the range of work the Government will be undertaking to reduce violence. This includes work to prevent future violence alongside enforcement.

Recommendation 40

40. An effective public health approach depends upon accurate data about the incidence and nature of violent crime. Effective data sharing amongst local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships about knife violence will assist in the development of preventative approaches, as well improving intelligence-led enforcement activity. Several witnesses cited the beneficial impact of an approach to sharing anonymous data about knife incidents pioneered in Cardiff on crime reduction levels. We were disappointed to learn that this has not been fully implemented throughout England and Wales and recommend that this is done immediately. All agencies within partnerships should have an equal duty to share. (Paragraph 188)

We agree that data sharing is vital and that is why TKAP has worked to promote this approach. At present, 61 hospitals in the TKAP areas are sharing data as a matter of course. Home Office and Department of Health officials will continue to press the remaining hospitals to begin full data sharing in the shortest possible time. In addition, 15 London hospitals, 16 North East hospital trusts and six South Yorkshire hospital trusts have now been engaged by TKAP with a view to increasing data sharing in these areas. By the end of TKAP in 2010, we aim to have 100 hospitals regularly sharing data.

The NHS Operating Framework 2009/10 was amended to include the following paragraph:

‘PCTs will work with CDRPs to identify and share information effectively in order to support local action on reducing violent crime – especially knife crime. This will include, wherever possible by March 2009, having local arrangements in place for collecting and sharing with police depersonalised A&E data on victims of violent assault in all nine Tackling Knives Action Programme areas.’

The Department of Health’s ‘Innovation Fund’ will support the development of new and existing A&E data sharing. 13 NHS Trusts across England in TKAP areas will receive over £200,000 between them to improve and implement data sharing in 2009/10 with the aim of increasing the number of hospitals sharing data in TKAP areas from 61 to over 100 by the end of 2009.

Recommendation 41

41. The General Medical Council is currently consulting on guidelines regarding the duty of medical practitioners to report details of specific knife injuries to the police. We are sympathetic to concerns that an automatic duty to report may dissuade some victims from seeking treatment. We also appreciate that the first duty of doctors is to their patients. However, we think that it is in the public interest that the police are informed when a person arrives at hospital with a wound inflicted in a violent attack and that the draft GMC guidelines, which allow for anonymity and patient consent where appropriate, would provide adequate safeguards. (Paragraph 189)

The Department of Health accepts the Committee’s position outlined on reporting of stab wounds. That is why the Department of Health has been working with the General Medical Council on its guidance which is due to be issued formally later this summer. This guidance is very similar in spirit to that of the gunshot wound guidance. Therefore once it is implemented we would expect reporting of gunshot and knife wounds to be treated in a similar way.

Recommendation 42

42. In light of evidence that children who witness or experience domestic violence are significantly more likely to go to commit violent crime, we recommend that the Home Office implements our detailed recommendations on preventing domestic violence published in June 2008. The Government should also consider introducing Treatment Orders in Family Courts so that men for whom there is not sufficient evidence to convict of a criminal offence but who are judged to be too violent to see their own children, are treated for violence before they go on to infect another family. (Paragraph 193)

We have implemented the majority of recommendations from the June 2008 report on Domestic Violence, Forced Marriage and Honour Based Violence, as demonstrated in our written updates to the committee in July and September 2008 and continue to take forward action on other recommendations.

The Children and Adoption Act 2006 gave the courts more flexible powers to direct a party in a case involving child contact to undertake a ‘contact activity’. Amongst the programmes available are domestic violence perpetrator programmes. These intensive (about 60 hours) interventions are designed to challenge and address participants’ violent and abusive behaviour and seek also to engage with victims and (if any) current partners.

The Act was fully implemented in December 2008. As this is a new form of provision that is developing gradually we are working with providers to build the coverage of these schemes nationally.

Recommendation 44

44. Participation in activities like sport or uniformed organisations can help young people to develop discipline, skills and confidence to control aggression, resist pressure to engage in street violence and raise their aspirations. We were greatly encouraged during our evidence sessions and visits round the country by the dedication shown by local public servants and volunteers to providing these activities. However, young people told us there is a shortage of places available for them. The Scout Association told us that a shortage of volunteer leaders in particular is preventing them from meeting demand. We recommend that the Government should work with employers to make it easier for their employees to volunteer their time. We also suggest there may be a need for a more strategic approach to provide consistent and tailored support for young people. In addition, young people told us that access to paid employment would make a criminal lifestyle less attractive. We recommend that the Government facilitates more part-time job opportunities for 14-18 year olds. (Paragraph 200)

Work related learning such as work experience, and the former Key Stage 4 engagement activities, have been shown to improve young people's attitudes, attainment and behaviour including among young people with additional educational needs. We therefore propose to continue to promote this type of learning. While part time jobs can help develop employability skills their main purpose is not focused on learning and there are employment restrictions for 14 - 16 year olds.

Recommendation 45

45. There appeared to be cross-party support for early interventions with very young children born into dysfunctional families. The Government has already begun to invest resources in family nurse partnerships and intensive fostering. It will be difficult to measure the success of such schemes in this country as they will not become evident for a generation. However, evidence from the United States indicated that investing in similar interventions can save a significant amount in future criminal justice costs. Such measures are resource-intensive, but are only needed for a small minority: around 5% of young people commit half of all youth crime, and the Government estimates that "real social failure" comes down to about 20,000 "hard core" families. The Government should target resources very specifically on these families. (Paragraph 207)

We are ensuring that all families with children most likely to become prolific offenders benefit from better targeting of existing services.

Over the next three years we will provide funding and expert practitioner support to every local authority and their partners to develop more effective ways of working between children's and adult's services. Our aim is to ensure that, by the end of the Comprehensive Spending Review period, as a result of our work with local partners all of the 110,000 high risk families who need it will benefit from better targeting of support and services in this way. A particular focus will be to ensure we improve services to families with primary aged children.



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