

Tackling knife crime with local communities

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My idea: Using community impact statements to build knife crime cases

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Violent crime, particularly crime involving knives and weapons, can be fatal for victims and has a huge impact on communities. Increases in serious violence have also created significant challenges for frontline policing. A number of strategies have emerged to improve the detection of weapon carrying and to deny opportunities for those who seek to commit such offences.

My team arrested a male who had a knife on him, who was then released without any further action. After discussing the case, I realised that the outlooks of the senior leadership teams and prosecutors differed, in terms of the wider consequences of knife crime. When considering the evidential test for charging, I noticed that there was an opportunity to influence the public interest element of the test, where the impact of a crime type on a community can be taken into account.

My idea was to introduce knife crime community impact statements into case files. These statements are written by senior officers and cover the impact that knife crime has had on the area. Some statements have included evidence of the links between knife crime, gang culture, illegal drugs and youth violence. Others have used this as an opportunity to express the views of schools and neighbourhood officers.

I am pleased that now half of the basic command units (BCUs) in the Met have produced community impact statements around knife crime, with others in the process of introducing them. Using these statements has two main benefits.

First, they stress the importance that the senior leadership teams place on knife crime to prosecutors.

Second, they remind decision makers of the broader impact that knife crime has on the community. Since introducing these statements, there has been an increase in positive outcomes for charges made for knife crime offences in the BCUs that use them.

This article was peer reviewed by Sergeant Jagwant Singh, Leicestershire Police

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