

Knives action programme expanded

The British government's Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) will be expanded to include a specialist team to help tackle gang-related violence.

TKAP works to stop all forms of serious violence amongst 13 – 24 year olds, and operates in 16 police force areas in England and Wales. The expanded programme will include:

- A police-led targeted programme of action in each TKAP area to tackle youth violence
- 100 hospitals to share anonymous data on their knife related admissions with police by the end of this year
- A £2m marketing campaign to raise awareness among young people of the consequences of carrying a knife
- An eight-part knife possession prevention programme, which includes education on the dangers of carrying knives, the law and the impact of knife crime on victims and communities
- £100,000 for a specialist team to work with local areas to tackle gang related problems
- More work to prevent homelessness among young people, and their families, affected by gang activity.

Police intelligence collected from the areas where TKAP is running suggests that while the likelihood of young people being involved in serious violence remains rare, the risks may vary between age groups.

For example, younger teenagers are more likely to be affected on the street, particularly in the time after school, whereas older teenagers and people in their early twenties are more likely to be affected when out and about in or outside bars and clubs, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights.

Findings from a report compiled during the first phase of TKAP (July 2008 – March 2009) found that for victims aged 19 and under, there was a 17% reduction in the number of recorded violence offences that involved sharp instruments (excluding robbery) compared with the same period the previous year.

In addition provisional NHS hospital admission statistics indicate a 32% drop in admissions for assault with a sharp object aged 19 compared with the same period in the previous year.

Meanwhile, the government has also published a follow-up to the Youth Crime Action Plan - One Year On, which sets out the progress made in tackling youth crime, and describes the action to be taken over the next year. It focuses on three key areas:

- Preventing young people offending by tackling problems such as alcohol or truancy early and providing positive and exciting things for them to do, particularly on Friday and Saturday nights
- More support to address causes of bad behaviour including non-negotiable support for families whose children are getting into trouble

- Tough enforcement, involving police working closely with other services on the streets and issuing punishments in which local communities have confidence.

Go to

www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/tackling_knives.htm

for more information on the TKAP programme.

Latest crime statistics released

Latest figures from the British Crime Survey (BCS) show that overall crime remains stable, with crime recorded by the police showing a 5% decrease compared with 2007-08.

BCS recorded violent crime remains stable, with police figures showing violence against the person has decreased by 6%. The BCS figures also show:

- No change in domestic burglary
- Vehicle theft and vandalism remain stable
- Robberies remain stable

Police figures showed a 1% increase in domestic burglary and a 2% fall in non-domestic burglary. They also show a 10% fall in offences against vehicles and in criminal damage.

The figures show some signs of acquisitive crime increasing, with the BCS showing incidents of theft from the person rising by 25%, and bicycle theft up 22%. However, police recorded figures show a 12% reduction in thefts from the person and no change in bicycle theft.

Home Secretary Alan Johnson described the statistics as 'encouraging,' claiming that

sets out 10 key principles on the subject and explores risk factors, parenting support, education, support for victims and their relatives and friends, interventions and sentencing.

The film, produced with the Media Trust, features some of the children and young people from Manchester, Merseyside, Birmingham and London who worked with 11 Million throughout the project, giving their perspective on gun and knife crime.

The report in particular highlights the need for good relations between children and young people.

Other principles include:

- The need to understand better the causes of offending, particularly by undertaking qualitative research with young offenders
- Parenting support for families, education about the risks, dangers and consequences of weapon-carrying
- The need to reduce fear of gun and knife crime among children and young people
- The need for interventions to be multi-agency and locally based, combining prevention and suppression
- Support for victims of gun and knife, and for relatives and friends of victims
- Penalties and sentences for gun and knife offences, which are designed to reduce re-offending
- The need for high-quality research and assessment.

On policing, Sir Al said: "Where

relations are good, it is likely that young people will feel less need to carry weapons and will be more likely to share information with the police about dangerous behaviour within their communities.

"Police forces are also more likely to maintain children and young people's confidence even if tactics like stop and search are agreed to be necessary. Young people have repeatedly told us that it is the way that stop and search is conducted that matters."

Sir Al's report adds that high-visibility policing has a role to play in providing reassurance, with a substantial majority of children and young people, from all socio-economic and racial groups, saying that seeing the police in their area makes them feel safer.

Police 'arrest 100,000 children a year'

A web-based children's charity claims around 100,000 children arrested each year have no further action taken against them.

According to Action Rights for Children (Arch) this represents about a third of the 300,000 young people under 18 who are arrested each year by police.

The charity claims many are being arrested for 'the slightest thing' especially on run-down estates, with some young people feeling angry and aggrieved because they haven't done anything wrong.

The claims are contained in a report by Arch on the National DNA Database, which contains 332,000 profiles of children and young people.

Go to www.archrights.org.uk for more information.

Drugs fight 'not just about arrests'

Tackling drugs is not just about seizures and arrests, according to a leading policy body.

The UK Drug Policy Commission (UKDPC) says that while enforcement has contained illegal drug supply, more arrests and drug seizures do not always lead to lower availability or fewer problems.

However, the commission says some innovative approaches have addressed the most harmful characteristics of entrenched drug markets such as violence and intimidation.

The independent body has called for new measures of impact so operations are judged on real benefits to communities, not simply arrests and seizures.

Most illegal drug markets in the UK are entrenched and resilient to traditional enforcement activity, and in some cases arrested dealers are 'replaced' in a matter of hours, the commission reports. This means it cannot be assumed that drug arrests and seizures will always benefit communities - in some cases they have actually made things worse.

However, even where drug markets cannot be eradicated, enforcement agencies have an opportunity to reduce the damage drugs inflict on communities, for instance by:

- Cracking down on gun violence, sexual exploitation or use of children as lookouts or couriers.

- ‘Closing’ open (flagrant) markets than can erode community confidence.
- Pushing markets out of particularly damaging places such as residential areas.
- Ensuring addicted users and dealers get treatment and support.

The report follows a year-long review involving national and local enforcement agencies and concludes that the government’s strategy focuses too much on seizures and arrests and not enough on reducing harm.

In a survey by the commission of over 400 law enforcers, only 21 per cent of respondents agreed (and only two per cent strongly) that current targets for enforcement agencies “are a good measure of the impact they have on drug related harms.” In addition, 90% thought it very unlikely that established UK drug markets will be eradicated in the foreseeable future.

Latest figures show that cocaine use rocketed by 25 per cent in the past 12 months in England and Wales. Almost a million adults admitted using the drug, and nearly half of those were aged between 16 and 24.

Go to www.ukdpc.org.uk/index.shtml for see the report or find out more about the commission.

Virtual courts deliver quick justice

A new virtual court pilot scheme in London designed to free up police time and ensure crimes as dealt with more quickly and effectively is being keenly monitored by law enforcers.

Cases are being heard within hours of charge via a secure video link between police stations and Camberwell Green Magistrates’ Court.

The pilot began at Charing Cross Police Station in May and already the first hearings in 36 cases have been dealt with through the virtual court – from drink driving cases where the defendant was sentenced on the day, to more serious offences such as wounding, where the case was sent to the Crown Court.

In one case, the defendant was charged with being drunk and disorderly and appeared at court via video link two and a half hours later. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced less than three hours after being charged.

Justice Minister Claire Ward said: “Virtual courts are vital in the government’s drive to deliver swift justice, improving the service given to victims, witnesses and defendants. These pilots help the courts, police, prosecutors, defence lawyers and the judiciary work better together to deliver quicker and more effective justice without any loss of quality. The faster we get justice done, the more we improve public confidence in the criminal justice system as whole.”

If successful, the London virtual courts pilot, which is co-ordinated by the London Criminal Justice Board and the Office for Criminal Justice Reform, could generate £2.2 million in benefits over the year across the criminal justice system. A wider roll out of virtual courts in other areas across England and Wales could deliver benefits in excess of £10 million a year.

Fifteen police stations are currently being linked to Camberwell Green Magistrates’ Court – Belgravia, Bexleyheath, Brixton, Bromley, Charing Cross, Croydon, Kennington, Lewisham, Paddington Green, Peckham, Plumstead, South Norwood, Streatham, Sutton and Walworth. Ten of these sites are already live, with the remaining five going live by the end of August.

Fight against organised crime stepped up

The government’s new strategy on serious organised crime introduces plans to create a more hostile environment for organised criminals by seizing assets and shutting business.

The strategy, *Extending our Reach*, outlines how the government and law enforcement agencies will use new tactics to fight organised crime. It includes plans to:

- Shut down businesses like saunas and massage parlours that are a front for criminal activity
- Seek to block mobile phone use in prisons
- Recover the assets of all organised criminals under investigation by putting ‘regional asset recovery teams’ in every part of the country
- Investigate the UK-based assets of criminals overseas
- Step up the approach to international organised crime through better coordination overseas

Serious and organised crime is a multi-billion pound global business. Trafficking in drugs and people, fraud, and financial

crime costs the UK economy around £30bn a year.

The UK's approach to fighting organised crime is said to be one of the most sophisticated in the world. However, trends such as the economic downturn, new technologies and globalisation are creating opportunities for organised criminals that didn't exist five years ago.

Proposal for young offenders academy

Government ministers are being asked to consider proposals for a pilot young offenders academy (YOA) in East London.

The Foyer Federation, which aims to transform disadvantaged young people's experiences, says an academy would help prevent re-offending by offering integrated services for young people involved in crime.

The academy would be on a single campus and include a pupil referral unit, facilities to deliver community sentences and a 75-place custodial facility. It would also offer training and employment opportunities.

The foundation says a pilot academy could be up and running by 2012 if it gets government backing.

Staged collision to promote safety

KiwiRail, New Zealand's national railway has staged a collision to promote safe behaviour at level crossings. The collision at the Matua Road level crossing in Kumeu near Auckland was a key component of KiwiRail input to the Australasian Rail Safety Week initiative during the last week of July.



As with other staged collisions in Britain and elsewhere the collision was a multi-agency initiative with the police, fire and ambulance services participating to hone their response to level crossing collisions. Longer-term benefit will come from the film of the collision, which will be used to raise awareness of the potential for them to come to harm in any encounter with a train. Another possible living testimony of the collision is to take the wrecked car on tour to show people at first hand what can happen. This latter idea was used by Railtrack in the UK in the 1990's and a wrecked car is currently being used in Queensland to promote safe behaviour at level crossings.

New Zealand has around 1,500 level crossings of which 96 are for pedestrians only. These crossings have witnessed four fatalities in the first six months of 2009.

Una Padel Award 2009

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, based at King's College, London is looking for an individual or organisation that has made, or shows the potential for making a real contribution to helping improve the lives of people caught up in the criminal justice system, their families and communities. The nomination process for this year's Una Padel Award is now underway with the centre inviting nominations by and for individuals and organisations working within the

criminal justice field, including charities and community groups, prisons, probation and police. Visit www.crimeandjustice.org.uk for further details and to download a nomination form.

New boss for crime reduction charity

An award-winning prison governor with a reputation for innovative ideas to focus prisoners on positive activities is to become the new head of crime reduction charity Nacro.

Paul McDowell, currently governor at HMP Brixton where he has been since 2006, will join Nacro in October. During his time at Brixton Mr McDowell introduced a radio station into the prison, to help educate and increase skills of prisoners. He also got prisoners involved in schemes such as Jail Guitar Doors, a charity set up by Billy Bragg, which provides musical instruments to prisoners.

And finally...

Hairspray paint sold in goody bags by a local newspaper is said to have prompted a town centre graffiti spree.

The bags were on offer at Midsomer Norton's Mardi Gras festival and contained copies of the Somerset Guardian and Standard newspapers, along with some brightly-coloured hairsprays.

It is thought some of the paints were used to daub graffiti around the town, forcing the council into a hasty clean-up operation ahead of a visit by Britain in Bloom judges.

Sam Holliday, Bath News and Media editor-in-chief: "I don't think we will be putting hairspray in the bags at any other events. We've learned our lesson."