



# City Management and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee

<b>Date:</b>	10 September 2019
<b>Classification:</b>	General Release
<b>Title:</b>	Knife Crime and the Council's Partnership Response
<b>Report of:</b>	Sara Sutton, Executive Director of City Management & Communities
<b>Cabinet Member Portfolio</b>	Public Protection and Licensing
<b>Wards Involved:</b>	All
<b>Policy Context:</b>	City for All
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## **1. Executive Summary**

This paper outlines the council's multi-agency response to tackling knife crime including Westminster's Knife Crime Action Plan, activity taken by the Serious Youth Violence Task Group, the new Public Health Approach and the work of the Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit and the Youth Offending Team.

## **2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration**

2.1 The Committee is asked to note the position and activity taking place in response to current high levels of knife crime experienced within Westminster.

2.2 The Committee is also asked to consider and reflect on some of the challenges their wards may be facing as a result with a view to improving response.

## **3. Background**

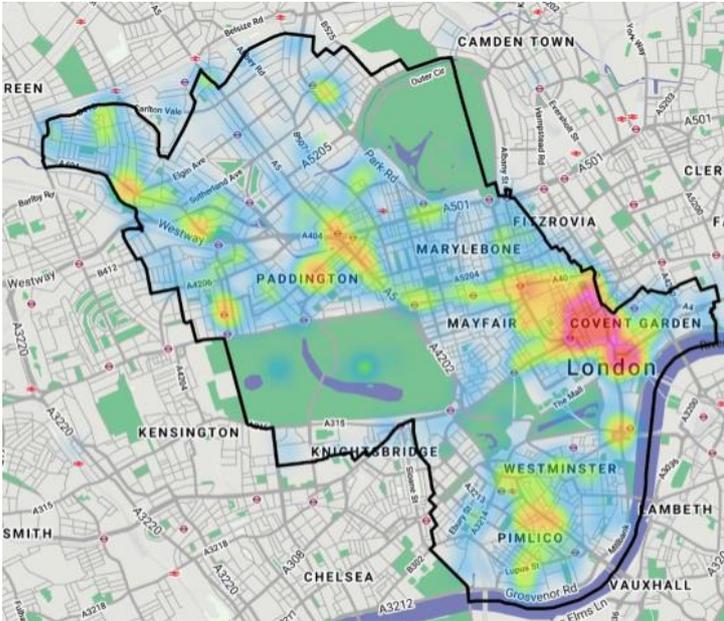
### **Levels of Knife Crime and Serious Violence in Westminster**

#### **3.1 Violence**

3.1.1 The Crime Survey of England and Wales shows that the level of lower-harm violent offences (for example, violence without injury and assault with minor injury) has not changed. However, police recorded crime gives more insight into the lower-volume but higher-harm violence that the survey does not capture well. This does show an increase in the number of recorded offences involving knives or sharp instruments.

3.1.2 Violence against the person offences have increased by 7% over the last year to June 2019 in Westminster and similarly across the MPS by 6%. Coupled with this increase is a fall in sanctioned detection rates from 14% a year ago to 11% in Westminster and similarly across the MPS. In Westminster 64% of all violence against the person offences are without injury. On average there are 29 violence against the person offences in Westminster a day compared with 27.5 a year ago.

3.1.3 This hotspot map below looks at the spatial distribution of violence against the person offences over April 2019. Offences are concentrated and have been historically in West End and St James’s wards.

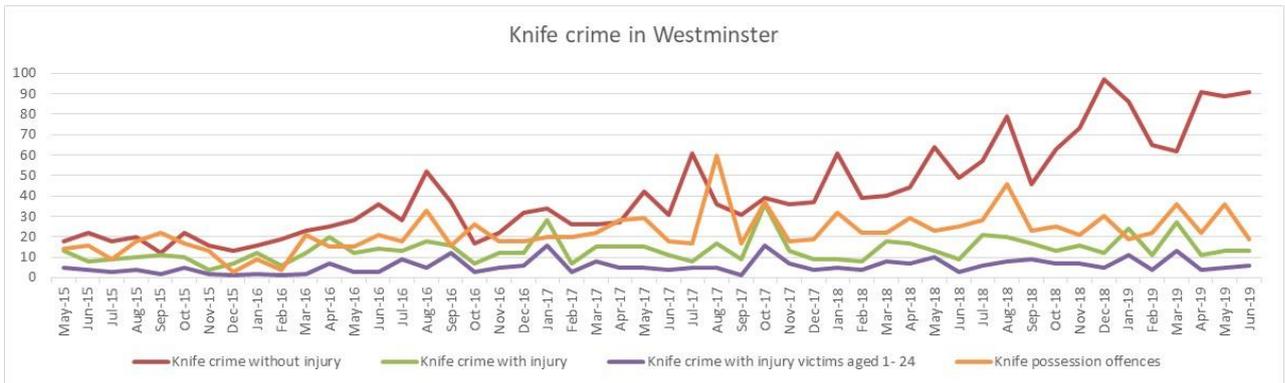


The chart below shows the temporal distribution of offences over date and time. Evidencing the peak time for offences to occur late evening.

	0700 - 0959	1000 - 1259	1300 - 1559	1600 - 1859	1900 - 2159	2200 - 0059	0100 - 0359	0400 - 0659																	
Mon	7	4	6	7	6	5	6	5	8	4	8	12	6	6	11	4	5	20	4	8	2	2	1	3	150
Tue	7	5	6	12	4	5	9	11	8	5	4	15	10	9	2	6	6	16	7	4	3		1	1	156
Wed	2	6	12	7	7	7	6	6	9	3	9	15	6	6	4	10	5	16	8	4	3	3		3	157
Thu	3	4	4	4	7	13	6	8	6	5	5	3	9	10	4	7	6	16	1	9	5	1	1		137
Fri	4	5	9	3	7	6	3	12	10	9	5	9	15	7	12	5	5	20	7	7	9	4	2	3	178
Sat	5	5	4	7	7	5	12	8	18	10	11	10	13	13	10	7	16	13	8	8	7	3			200
Sun	3	4		3	4	8	11	6	9	7	7	20	6	10	8	10	14	23	3	3	5		2	3	169
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>1,147</b>

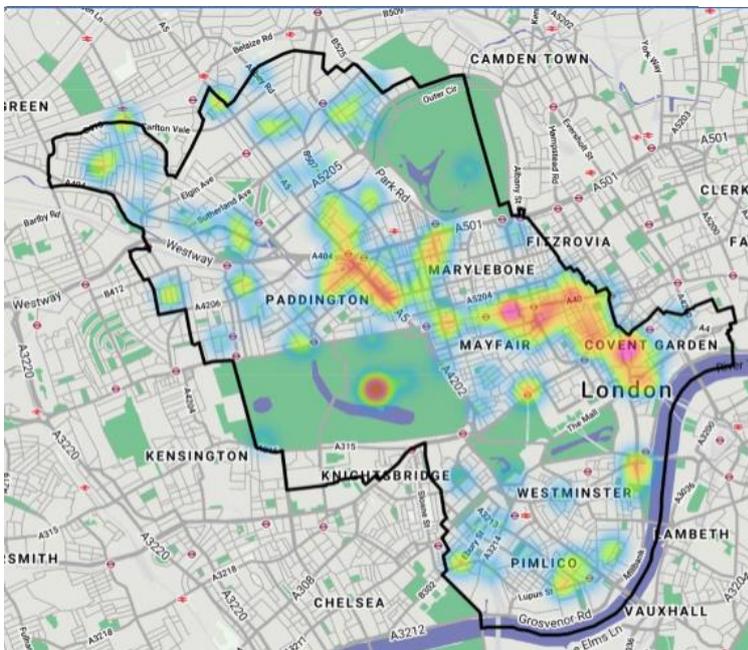
### 3.2 Knife crime

This chart looks at knife crime in Westminster over the last four years and includes all ages.



3.2.1 In the last year knife crime has increased by 56% in Westminster compared with a 1% increase across the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). 18% of all knife crime in Westminster was with injury compared with 27% across the MPS. There were 85 knife crime victims with injury who were aged 1-24 compared with 75 a year ago.

3.2.2 30% of knife offences were knife possession in Westminster compared with 37% across the MPS. The sanctioned detection rates have declined significantly from 15% a year ago to 7.7% in Westminster, the same is true of knife crime with injury offences which have declined from 22.9% to 11.6%. Levels for both remain lower than across the MPS at 12.1% for knife crime and 16.7% knife crime with injury.

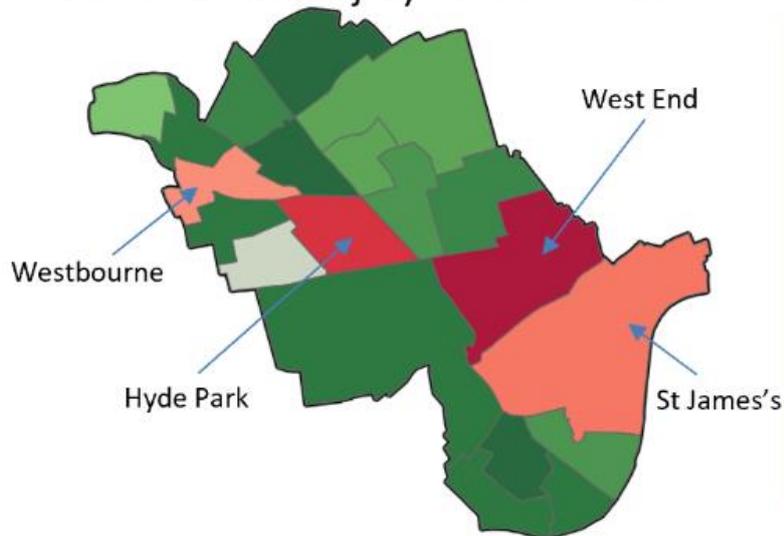


This map looks at the spatial distribution of knife crime offences over June 2019. With the majority concentrated in the West End and St James's Wards. 40% of all knife crime in June was linked to robbery offences.

	0700 - 0959	1000 - 1259	1300 - 1559	1600 - 1859	1900 - 2159	2200 - 0059	0100 - 0359	0400 - 0659																
Mon			2	1	1	1	2		1	1	2	2	2	2	1	18								
Tue	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	24							
Wed			2	3	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	5	2	24							
Thu			2		1		4	2		1	3	4		1	2	20								
Fri				4		2	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	5	3	4	1	1	1	1	31			
Sat	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	3	1	2		1	2	1	1	3		1			25			
Sun		1			1	2	2	1	2	3	1	4	2	2	2	3		1			1	28		
<b>Total</b>	2	1	2	6	3	7	12	10	9	11	13	6	12	11	12	7	17	11	7	6	2	1	2	170

This table looks at the temporal distribution of knife crime offences over April 2019. Evidencing a slight peak on Friday/Saturday evening.

### Knife crime with injury victims 1 - 24



This map looks at knife crime with injury victims aged 1 – 24 over the last year to June 2019.

3.2.3 Over half (56%) of all victims were within four wards of the borough.

- 18% West End
- 13% St James's
- 12% Hyde Park
- 12% Westbourne

Despite the increasing levels of knife crime, the percentage of people who think it is a problem is only 18% in Westminster compared with 28% across the MPS.

3.2.4 Robbery offences have increased by 60% in Westminster in the last year. The vast majority of offences are personal robbery. Robbery is disproportionately concentrated in London. 12.6% of all personal robberies across London are in Westminster. 6.6% within West End and St James's wards. 4.4% of all personal robberies in England and Wales took place in Westminster. **Robbery is a key driver of knife crime.** There are on average 10 personal robberies a day in Westminster compared with 6.5 the previous year. The map

above looks at the spatial distribution of robberies in Westminster over April 2019. As can be seen they are very concentrated in the West End and St James's wards.

3.2.5 In response to the high levels of robbery, the police recently formed a dedicated robbery squad to tackle this prevalent issue. Whilst still early days, notable successes are already being achieved by this new approach. In addition, Westminster Police are also focussing on open drug markets within the borough as there is definite link between drug supply, violence and knives. Again, early results are proving very encouraging.

### **3.3 Multi-agency response**

3.3.1 No issue relating to serious youth violence has a single aspect or cause and no single agency, service or organisation can address this issue alone. As such, Westminster is highly supportive of a whole-system approach as the most effective at delivering a long-term solution to reducing serious youth violence. Westminster tackles serious violence using a multi-agency approach involving a range of partners and agencies, such as education, health, social services, housing, youth and victim services, offender management and others. We also work in close partnership with the voluntary and charitable sector to develop targeted interventions in local communities with action guided by evidence of the problems and what works in tackling root causes. There is cross-portfolio responsibility for violence and knife crime with cross-departmental leadership of the Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit. The Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services is a highly valuable member of the Serious Youth Violence Task Group.

3.3.2 **The Serious Youth Violence Task Group** continues to provide the council's focus on working together across Council departments, the MPS and with partner agencies to adapt to the changing nature of violence in Westminster. The Task Group looks at how we can better understand the drivers behind serious violence in the borough, in order to provide appropriate strategic and tactical responses, as well as empowering our communities to help reduce serious youth violence.

3.3.3 The Task Group has been leading on a number of initiatives which include:

- Developing a serious youth violence toolkit for parents and carers in Westminster to equip them with a glossary of facts, practical advice to look for signs of their child's involvement, tips on how to speak to their child and how to seek further help or support within the borough. The leaflet is now published and is being distributed across the City.
- A Task Group meeting, focusing on schools and how the partnership can support young people in education and schools in addressing serious youth violence.
- Leading on the Council's Public Health approach to serious youth violence. A workshop was held exploring what a Public Health whole systems approach to serious youth violence could look like in Westminster. The workshop began to collectively capture what we are currently doing that contributes to a Public Health approach and what we could be doing more from a PH perspective to shape an action plan. The full outcome of this workshop has contributed towards the new Public Health Approach that has now been adopted by the Health and Wellbeing Board as a priority for 2019/20 (see below).

- The Task Group decided to pilot the proposed Public Health approach and the identified evidence-based interventions in Church Street. Work is currently ongoing to develop preventative education sessions in primary and secondary schools and sessions with young people during the school summer holidays; training in schools for professionals, as well as linking in opportunities for positive activities and consultation with young people alongside the Church Street Regeneration programme.
- Following a Task Group workshop on Community Engagement, a gap was identified in terms of having a dedicated post to develop engagement with the local community. A Serious Youth Violence Engagement Officer has now been recruited and began work at the end in August 2019.
- Developing a multi-agency performance dashboard

#### **4. Westminster Knife Crime Action Plan**

4.1 MOPAC published its Anti-Knife Crime Strategy in 2017. The strategy has six key themes:

- Governance
- Targeting lawbreakers
- Keeping weapons off our streets
- Protecting and educating young people
- Standing with communities, neighbourhoods and families against knife crime
- Supporting victims of knife crime and offering ways out of cri

4.2 The Westminster Local Knife Crime Action Plan was refreshed in May 2019 and is overseen by Community Safety. It was updated and agreed within the Youth Crime Prevention Partnership, which sits within the broader Safer Westminster Partnership. The latest refresh reflects the shift within the IGXU to include exploitation, such as the new Gangs Multi-Agency Child Exploitation (GMACE) meeting which takes place every six weeks and its purpose is to identify, monitor and disrupt high risk gang members and identify young people at risk of exploitation in order to identify the links and to develop common themes in order to provide an adequate partnership response. The plan also reflects the changes in responsibilities following the BCU merger.

#### **5. Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit (IGXU)**

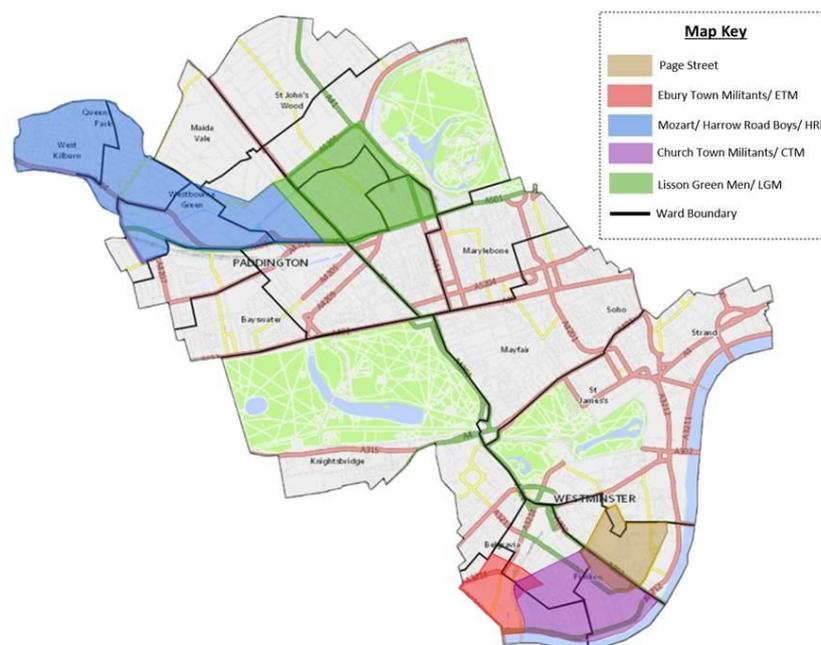
5.1 The IGXU is a multi-agency team funded by Community Safety, Family Services, MOPAC and the Home Office, consisting of the following professionals:

- Dedicated gangs police team
- Four flexible gangs workers
- A gang exit worker
- A Community Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) professional
- A specialist sexual exploitation worker
- An employment coach
- Two anti-social behaviour caseworkers
- A data analyst

- Two managers - one service manager and one deputy service manager
- Family therapist
- Two additional flexible workers operating in RBKC and H&F
- Community Engagement worker

5.2 The IGXU identify and work with vulnerable and exploited young people aged between 10 and 24 who are involved in group violence or on the periphery of gangs to improve their life choices, social integration, reduce associations with gangs and reduce incidences of serious youth violence. The IGXU report to the Youth Crime Prevention Panel which itself in turn reports to the Safer Westminster Partnership Board. In 2019 the IGXU was able to expand its resources following a successful bid to the Home Office Early Years Intervention Fund and has expanded its remit to provide flexible gang workers in Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham (LBHF). This enables the team's approach and intelligence to be a shared approach across all three boroughs. A full-time family therapy clinician has joined the team. To work both directly with families and to work alongside flexible gang workers to help them utilise their systemic training use this approach with families and young people.

5.3 The unit has also widened its focus beyond just gangs to deal with **criminal exploitation** (e.g. County Lines) and this has been reflected in the name change to the Integrated Gangs and Exploitation Unit (IGXU).



#### 5.4 Current Westminster Gangs and local tensions

The above map shows the current locations of known gangs/groups in Westminster. Since March 2019 there has been very little intelligence or reported incidents denoting any major conflict or tensions between different gangs that have resulted in serious assaults. There is intelligence to suggest that most of the current gang tensions are internal between members vying for superiority within the group or positioning themselves as 'key players' amongst the membership. Westminster gangs appear at the moment to be concentrating on illegal business activities, in particular drug dealing, rather than vying for supremacy

amongst each other. This is always a very fluid situation which can escalate at very short notice.

## **5.5 IGU County Lines work**

5.5.1 County lines is a term used to describe the criminal exploitation by gangs and organised criminal networks of vulnerable children or adults to export illegal drugs into one or more importing areas (within the UK). County Lines is currently a growing issue for the IGXU, with offenders travelling as far as Norfolk and Hampshire. New patterns have emerged highlighting the importance of developing a more collaborative approach and model in partnership with other London Boroughs, as well as key services and partners in pertinent Home Counties. The new MOPAC funded Response and Rescue Service which operates across London will play a key part in coordinating intelligence and analysis around this growing issue. The National Crime Agency (NCA) has recently started to take executive action by conducting widescale operations against County Lines.

5.5.2 Westminster's IGXU have started an analysis of County Lines operating from the borough. Initial findings show we have at least 28 people from one gang alone going to 20 counties. This is a rapidly changing picture. Bearing this in mind the pattern of change we see currently in Westminster suggests:

- A move from an emphasis on post code disputes to drug dealing for profit
- Movement from closed groups to less fixed more fragile alliances based on money and business
- Movement from high visibility of gangs (i.e. wearing certain colours) to low visibility
- Use of high-quality video music postings as adverts for their lifestyle 'the life' rather than fuelling adversity between groups
- Movement from local neighbourhood dealing to distribution in distant counties
- Changes from known young people to those 'under the radar' and less likely initially to be known and monitored
- Acts of violence between groups and individuals specifically for control of drug markets

## **5.6 Westminster Youth Offending Team (YOT)**

5.6.1 The Youth Crime Prevention Partnership (YCPP) acts as the management board that oversees the local delivery of responsibilities under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 for Youth Justice Services. It is chaired by the Director of Family Services and provides strategic direction to prevent offending and reoffending by children and young people. It is accountable to the Safer Westminster Partnership via an Offender Delivery Group. The YCPP is an active and well attended board; it receives regular performance reports, discusses emerging issues to find a partnership response, receives updates on audit compliance and the impact on service delivery as well as details of any safeguarding or critical incident reporting to the YJB.

5.6.2 Data for the period April 2018 – March 2019, in relation to Westminster's YOT performance, shows the following:

- The YOT caseload has gradually been reducing. In April 2017 it was 63 and in March 2019 it was 39. It remains around the 39 – 42 figures. This caseload is made up predominantly of males with the majority being 16 – 17 years old, although there was an increase in 14-year olds in 2018. The highest offences in the group were for ‘violence against the person’ at 24% and drugs at 28%.
- There has been a decrease in first time entrants to the youth justice system and Westminster’s figures are below the London average and near to the national average.
- Reoffending rates have reduced but those that do reoffend do so on more occasions. This supports what we know about the caseload, that it has reduced overall but those in the system have more complex needs. This may be one of the reasons that only 47.5% of the caseload are in education, employment or training and this is a priority area for development. The team are working closely with the economic development team and education colleagues to increase this figure. In the last year an educational psychologist has been assessing the unmet needs of our cohort as many have fallen out of education before being fully assessed.
- Custodial sentences for young people known to the YOT reduced significantly between April 2018 and March 2019 on the preceding year, from 11 to just four young people.
- The numbers of young offenders under 18 have been reducing over the past three years, particular young offenders committing violent offences:
  - In 2016/17 there were 99 violent offences recorded, 34 involving the possession of a knife, blade, offensive weapon
  - In 2017/18 there were 84 violent offences recorded, 27 involving the possession of a knife, blade, offensive weapon
  - In 2018/19 there were 60 violent offences recorded, 18 involving the possession of a knife, blade, offensive weapon

5.6.3 Westminster’s YOT uses a relational approach to its one to one work with young people and their families. We believe that by focusing on understanding the reasons for the behaviour, rather than just the result of the behaviour, young people will be supported to make more sustained change. We recognise that many of the young people known to the Youth Offending Team have unmet needs, which have impacted on their life choices. All staff in the team have now been trained in systemic and trauma informed practice to support the development of our relational approach.

## **6. Additional local and partnership initiatives in Westminster**

### **6.1 Knife crime day of action**

In June 2019 City Operations led on a day of action with our Metropolitan Police Service colleagues primarily focusing on the responsible sale of knives by small and medium business within the borough. 293 shops selling knives were visited in the key hot-spot areas to engage with the shop-keepers to promote the responsible sale of knives, and the safe display of sharp objects to prevent theft. The MPS committed significant resources to support the day of action and will focussed on preventative and enforcement opportunities, including weapon sweeps, knife arch operations and high visibility patrols. This is the first day of action that has been conducted and

volunteers from across Public Protection and Licensing participated. Future day of actions are being planned.

## **6.2 Community Weapons Sweep**

We and the Police operate regular community weapons sweeps which are used to detect knives and offensive weapons left in open spaces - in vegetation or otherwise concealed from view. These items are then removed from circulation. These weapons have either been left for safekeeping so its owner cannot be caught with it, left for trade/pickup or even used as communal weapons for gang members. Residents and the community are encouraged to take part with the police to show unity against weapons and a shared responsibility to keep the community safe

## **6.3 Victims of serious assault protocol**

The council is developing a new approach to supporting victims of serious crime, particularly knife crime. Following best practice from across the UK a project was initiated to determine how better council and partnership services can quickly and efficiently respond not only to the victim's needs, but also that of the victim's families (especially siblings), connected communities (e.g. schools) and the wider community. Deliver of this multi-agency protocol is scheduled for Autumn 2019.

## **7. Changes to the MPS approach to Stop and Search**

The Home Secretary has amended *some* of the requirements of the Home Office 'Best use of Stop and Search' scheme, with effect from 31st March 2019 and as part of a 12-month trial involving seven forces including the MPS. This brings the rank of authorising officer to the level required in the legislation, namely Inspector or above. Westminster has seen an increase in the number of authorities since these changes came into effect and have been authorised immediately after incidents of serious violence, or pre-emptively following the receipt of intelligence that serious violence is imminent. The authorisations have been either borough-wide or in specific locations, and all for specific time periods as per the requirements of the legislation. The council has always been informed when an authority has been made. There has been a significant uplift in stop and search activity following the change in legislation and directions given by the Senior Leadership of the MPS.

## **8. Public Health Approach**

8.1 The bi-borough Health and Wellbeing Board has adopted violence as a key priority for 2019/20. The Home Office has also recently announced that it expects to legislate to make the partnership public health approach to violence a legal 'duty to co-operate' amongst all partners.

8.2 The causes of youth violence are complex and multifactorial. A 'risk factor' is a "characteristics that increases the likelihood of a person becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence, or of a place having high rates of youth violence"<sup>1</sup>. The following table outlines the risk factors associated with SYV by ecological level.<sup>1</sup> These risk factors are influential at

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<sup>1</sup> Preventing youth violence: an overview of the evidence. WHO 2015

differing developmental stages from conception and early infancy 0-1 year, through to early adulthood 18-19 years. This recognition of a life course approach emphasises the importance of prevention and early intervention.

Ecological Level	Risk Factors
Individual risk factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)</li> <li>• Undiagnosed/ unmet need around speech and language challenges</li> <li>• Pre-existing mental health issues</li> <li>• Attention deficit, hyperactivity, conduct disorder</li> <li>• or other behavioural disorders</li> <li>• Physical violence/aggression</li> <li>• Positive attitude towards delinquency</li> <li>• Gang involvement</li> <li>• Previous criminal activity/ persistent offending</li> <li>• Long-term exposure to violence (also through media)</li> <li>• Alcohol consumption/ drug use</li> </ul>
Family and close relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor parental supervision</li> <li>• Harsh and inconsistent discipline by parents</li> <li>• Disrupted home life/change in the primary carer</li> <li>• Family history of antisocial behaviour</li> <li>• Unemployment in the family</li> <li>• Gang membership</li> <li>• Bullying perpetration and victimisation</li> <li>• Child in local authority care or leaving care</li> </ul>
Community and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to alcohol</li> <li>• Illicit drug markets</li> <li>• Harmful use of drugs</li> <li>• Access to weapons</li> <li>• Poverty</li> <li>• Inequality</li> </ul>

8.3 However, not all young people classed as high risk will ultimately engage in violence so it is also important to consider the ‘protective factors’ that may reduce the likelihood of involvement in youth violence including high resilience and self-esteem; low levels of

impulsiveness; pro-social attitudes; close relationships to parents and stable family structure; intensive parental supervision; medium socioeconomic status; strong ties to school; satisfactorily educational attainment and aspirations; having positive social connections and non-deviant peers; and living in a non-violent neighbourhood with low economic deprivation<sup>4</sup>.

8.4 A Public Health approach is a multi-agency, whole system approach to serious youth violence, looking at the root causes, wider and contextual influences of health and crime. Prevention and early intervention are key as well as working with a wide range of partners as part of a long-term, integrated multi-agency approach rather than taking a procedural justice response which deals with the consequences.

8.5 At its core a public health approach is an acknowledgement that no issue relating to violence has a single aspect or cause and that no single agency, service or organisation has all the answers.

8.6 A Public Health approach has **six broad criteria**:

- It is focused on the whole population but may prioritise targeting the individuals, families and communities most at risk of becoming involved in youth violence It is established with and for communities
- It is not constrained by organisational, professional, service or sector boundaries but requires an integrated approach to achieving shared outcomes
- It is focused on prevention, addressing the root causes of youth violence as well as early intervention with high risk groups
- It requires a long-term commitment to action and an acknowledgement that return of investment may take years
- It is based on data and intelligence
- It is rooted in evaluation and evidence of effective practice

8.7 To date the key Public Health contributions in this agenda have been:

- To influence the thinking of the Task Group to take a Public Health approach and focus intervention efforts earlier and across the life course.
- To work with partners to map current activity and identify opportunities as part of the Prevention Matrix exercise.
- To provide Project Management support to the emerging Church Street Pilot.
- To commission the Healthy Schools programme, The Health Visiting Service and the School Health Service.
- To scope out a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment on the health needs of youth offenders and those at risk of becoming youth offenders. Including those accessing the pupil referral unit and those engaged with the IGXU.
- Contributed to the consultation from the Home Office on a new legal duty to support a multi-agency approach to preventing and tackling serious violence.

8.8 To continue to contribute to addressing SYV, including knife crime, in the borough Public Health can add value by:

- Engaging health partners including NHS A&E departments and CCGs alongside key Public Health commissioned services such as the School Nurses and Health Visitors.
- Providing data and intelligence by playing a leading role in shaping a dataset to be accessed by all key stakeholders to inform action.
- Embedding health messages in the Youth Offending Services in response to the cohort's specific health needs.
- Strengthening governance and providing leadership on the agenda.

## **9. Current Activities to Address Knife Crime and Serious Youth Violence by Westminster Family Services**

9.1 Children's services have a key role in the prevention of knife and serious youth violence committed by young people, including the provision of the following services:

- The Youth Offending Team has a multi-agency partnership set up under the direction of the Crime and Disorder Act which includes representatives from social services, police, probation education and health. The aim of this team is to work with young people and families to address factors that lead to offending health. The YOT is overseen by the YOT management board (the Youth Crime Prevention Partnership).
- The Multi-Agency Safeguard Hub (MASH) brings together key professionals to facilitate early better-quality information sharing analysis and decision making to safeguard vulnerable children more effectively.
- Early Help aims to achieve outcomes for children and families and one of the key areas in their strategy for delivering this is prevention of crime and serious youth violence. Early Help can make a significant contribution to the prevention of youth crime because of their close links to universal providers, which enables the early identification of need. One of the referral criteria to Westminster's targeted Early Help team is for prevention of crime and, as part of this, the team undertake one-to-one work with young people and their families.
- Emerging Family Hubs are important community assets where families can access a range of support.
- #MyWestminster Staying Safe Programme: partnership including Young Westminster Foundation, Avenues Youth Project, Marylebone Bangladesh Society, Red Thread and Victim Support delivering support to 50 young people at risk of crime and rolling out capacity building programme to youth workers in partnership with the Metropolitan Police Service.
- The service hosted a Youth Providers Roundtable in April 19 to discuss how, together with partners, we can help young people to fulfil their potential and offer them the right mix of services that will inspire our young people and support them to achieve their ambitions.
- In the summer, the council announced a £500K budget to support youth services within the borough. The Cabinet Member for Children's and Family Services held a Youth Providers workshop prior to the announcement to bring together youth

services partners from across the City. The distribution of the money will be conducted in partnership with the Westminster Young People's Foundation.

9.2 In addition to the above, Children Services has started a school inclusion pilot to tackle increased exclusions as a way of reducing youth crime. This has three components:

- 1) trauma informed training for staff;
- 2) a dedicated team of Early Help Family Practitioners led by a family therapist; and
- 3) one-to-one or group mentoring for each child.

## **10. Youth Select Committee Consultation and the Westminster Youth Council**

10.1 The Youth Select Committee has launched an inquiry into Knife Crime, which will inform the committee's annual report. The Committee welcomes submissions from a wide range of stakeholders, including young people, charities and organisations that directly support offenders and victims of knife crime, as well as schools and businesses. In preparing our response, 19 members of Westminster Youth Council (WYC) were asked for their feedback on the enquiry's Youth related questions. WYC is comprised of Children and Young People aged 11-19 from a variety of ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Two Youth Council meetings were devoted to discussing the Youth Select Committee enquiry. Cllr Nickie Aiken, Leader of Westminster City Council, and Rebecca Lawrence, Chief Executive of the Mayor of London's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) attended the second of these meetings.

## **11. Police response since the introduction of the BCU model in February 2019 (Submission from the MPS Westminster)**

11.1 The BCU went live on 20th February 2019. To date transition has and continues to be challenging, performance remains relatively consistent daily conference calls and review undertaken. The Five strands are now fully operational: Response, Neighbourhoods, Safeguarding, and Investigations and HQ. Interconnectivity between strands is vital to continued success.

11.2 The Partnership working continues to be strengthened, with dedicated points of contacts threaded throughout teams and strands. It is our absolute priority to keep people safe, reduce violence, and deal with the things that matter the most to the people we serve. Bearing down on violent crime on the streets of Westminster continues to be a top priority for the BCU. We are working tirelessly - day and night – to identify and pursue offenders, help bring perpetrators to justice, take weapons off the street, support victims, engage and reassure the public, and keep our communities safe.

11.3 Violent crime increased nationally from 2016, and whilst London saw particular increases at the beginning of 2018, more recently we have seen the rates not only begin to stabilise but in relation to the number of overarching knife crime and in particular in regard to people under the age of 25, it has started to reduce. However, we are not complacent and will continue to prioritise violent crime. Tackling violent crime requires strong partnership working. Police often have a role in galvanising a response, but it will take sustained and effective partnership working with a truly holistic, preventative approach at grass-roots levels to deal with the complex causes and to create tangible alternatives for our young

people, helping them avoid the draw into gangs and violence. Our communities have a vital role to play in tackling violent crime.

11.4 The MPS continue to encourage anyone who may have information about serious crime in their neighbourhood to come forward this information could save lives in the future. We are working to build trust and support to signpost to our communities the ways in which they can get this information to us. Crime stoppers is a prime example. We are using a range of tactics and technologies, to both tackle and prevent violence. These tactics are delivered across the Service by local policing supported by a dedicated Violent Crime Taskforce that works alongside Trident and other specialist units to deliver:

#### 11.4.1 Prevent

- Intelligence-led stop and search - we are driving up the number of intelligence-led stop and searches which has led to over 4,000 weapons being taken off the streets of London, further preventing crime, injuries and saving lives.
- S60 authorities to safeguard communities in geographical areas where violence is believed to be likely or has occurred. This allows officers to search without grounds specific areas. The use of this power is closely monitored and evaluated
- Test purchase operations to restrict sale of knives to young people and keep deadly weapons off our streets;
- Protection and education of young people - working alongside schools and other organisations, work has been happening to deliver key crime prevention messaging to young people and to undertake activities to keep children safe both in and outside of their school environment. There are currently schools officers across Westminster. The regular presence of SSOs within schools helps build confidence between police, teachers, parents and students. This has led to information being shared more willingly with officers which can help predict potential disorder or fights, identify young people carrying knives and encourage the reporting of crimes.
- Removal of illegal online content that incites violence – we are fully exploiting all legislative options to ensure videos and content that incites violence are removed from the internet;

#### 11.4.2 Protect

- Effective intelligence on criminal gangs to ensure our resources are directed at the groups causing the most harm;
- Activity to support drug / ASB related enforcement within communities such as closure orders.
- Support to victims of knife and gun crime – ensuring that improving support to victims is at the heart of a holistic response.
- We are working with colleagues from other agencies, including local authorities and social care, to safeguard both vulnerable children and young adults who are often targeted and exploited by criminals and organised crime networks, or who are exposed to or become involved in violence and associated criminality due to their domestic circumstances, friends or older siblings.

#### 11.4.3 Pursue

- Additional and targeted intelligence-led, high-visibility patrols, occasionally including convoys, to reassure local communities and demonstrate a show of strength or to flood an area to deter and disrupt criminal activity;
- Covert operations, involving specialist officers targeting the most dangerous criminals, drug dealers and gangs;
- Activity against moped-enabled offending, including a range of tactics such as DNA spray to tag offenders so we can identify them months after they commit a crime;
- Targeted activity in ‘hot spot’ areas where we have seen the largest increases in violence;
- Enforcement against the network of drugs markets, from street dealers to importers;
- Taking out injunctions and court orders against gangs and their members to restrict their ability to operate;
- Traffic and roads policing – check points and key locations to disrupt movement of weapons, drugs or stolen property;

#### 11.4.3 Prepare

- Public information campaigns to educate the public and urge citizens to be vigilant and report concerns to police; and to give them the confidence to play a proactive part in tackling the issue within their communities
- Community Supporting - Standing with communities, neighbourhoods and families who want to stand up against violent crime and the harm it does;
- Support to the work of our partners in understanding and effectively tackling the root causes of drug and violent crime affecting young people and take a holistic approach to long-term problem-solving;
- Opportunities offering a way out of crime – recognising that young people should be offered interventions which help them move away from criminality towards a brighter future.

11.4.4 The causes and drivers of violence are complex, and so effective solutions must be holistic and sustainable and will involve a range of action from government, education, health, social services, housing, youth services, and victim services. Chronic social issues such as deprivation, absent families and domestic abuse, are leading to increased vulnerability putting some young people more at risk of becoming involved in gangs and associated criminality and ASB. Some young people, who may have unstable home lives in addition to living in areas where gangs/crime are more prevalent, maybe drawn into gang culture or carrying knives as a way to feel a sense of belonging and safety.

11.4.5 Drugs are a driver and prove to be involved in many cases of violence. Growing cocaine markets, not only within the capital but across the country, have strong links to increases in serious violence. Social media is playing a role in escalating violence between young people and enabling content that glamorises or encourages violence and crime. It is responsible for contributing to the “respect” culture, and that the perceived “humiliation” or “disrespecting” of individuals and groups reaches wider audiences with extended legacy and therefore action must be taken in an equally public manner. **The response to violent and knife crime is a collective effort and an organisational priority. Officers and staff from across the service are undertaking proactive activities to effectively prevent and investigate violent crime**

11.4.6 Dedicated ward officers and the West End Business Engagement Team work closely with the community they serve to identify problems. This often generates from concerns raised by businesses or residents supported by analytical data. This leads to ongoing, multi-agency problem solving of high-risk venues. The police in Westminster are shortly undergoing training to use the WCC system to make this process as seamless as possible and reduce barriers to information sharing.

11.4.7 This allows us to seek additional support from specialist units within the MPS. We have a proven record in obtaining additional support from the Territorial Support Group and Violent Crime Task Force to specifically target knife crime and serious youth violence. When specialist units are secured, we provide a bespoke, timely briefing from a proactive crime team showing the latest high-risk areas.

## **12. MOPAC Knife Crime GSP Tagging on Licence Project**

12.1 In 2017 The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) published the London Knife Crime Strategy. The Strategy takes a public health approach to tackling knife crime, incorporating prevention, intervention, enforcement and support for victims. The Strategy includes a commitment to pilot the use of GPS tagging with knife crime offenders being released from prison on licence. This pilot began in February 2019 and was initially open to any offender being released from a London prison to an address in the four pilot boroughs: Lewisham, Lambeth, Croydon or Southwark.

12.2 From June 2019 a phased expansion of the pilot is planned to cover offenders returning to 20 boroughs. The end date of the pilot is now set for April 2020, this being the last date at which new cases can be tagged. Westminster is in the 1<sup>st</sup> tranche of the expansion.

12.3 To be eligible an offender must be:

- Aged 18+
- Serving a sentence for either a knife possession offence or another offence which involved the use of a knife or bladed object
- Being released during the pilot from a London prison to one of the pilot boroughs.
- Being released to some type of viable accommodation (to enable tag charging)

12.4 Additional screening of cases will be done to ensure that only those cases whose risk and need can be proportionately and justifiably managed by GPS have it included in their licence conditions.

12.5 The overall aim of this pilot is that GPS is tested as a tool for reducing the likelihood of offenders committing further weapon related offences. Specifically, this will include:

- That GPS data is used to improve the management of the risk posed to known adults, children and the public.
- That GPS improves the enforcement of licence conditions and increases deterrence from further offending.
- That location data is used to challenge offender's thinking and lifestyle and improves rehabilitation.

- That GPS location data is shared appropriately for enhanced crime detection.

12.6 Key partners in this pilot include the National Probation Service (London division), London Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC), Metropolitan Police, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and Buddi Ltd (GPS monitoring provider).

### **13. Development of the MOPAC Violence Reduction Unit**

13.1 Announced by the Mayor in September 2018, the Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) is bringing together specialists from health, police, local government, probation and community organisations to tackle violent crime and the underlying causes of violent crime. It is based on a Public Health approach to serious youth violence, one where the public sector institutions and communities that make up London act together to help cut violence. It will seek to reduce all forms of violence - whether it is committed with a gun, knife, broken bottle or fist, by a young person or adult. The VRU will share information about what works in spotting the early signs of what might lead to criminal behaviour and focusing attention and resources on what makes a difference.

13.2 The goals of the Violence Reduction Unit are to:

- Stabilise and reduce violence across London
- Find the major causes of violence and co-ordinate action across London to tackle them at scale, delivering a long-term reduction in crime and associated harms
- Involve communities in the work of the VRU and build their capacity to deliver the best long-term solutions to reduce violence.

13.3 The Violence Reduction Unit will provide London with greater capacity, expertise and co-ordination to identify the major causes of violence and deliver early interventions to help prevent the spread of violence. The Unit's work will involve gathering data from health, criminal justice and other public services. This data will be used to help identify the underlying risk factors that can lead to violence, diagnose the problem and then assist in the development and the delivery of plans and interventions - alongside communities - to tackle them. It is not currently clear what the operating model will look like. Whilst there were early plans to set up six local VRU 'hubs' across London, the model will now take a more hyper-local, place-based approach. The VRU central team say that this will allow for a deeper understanding of, and investment in, areas of London which are either experiencing significant increases in violence (in which case the VRU will invest in community-led, innovative solutions) or decreases in violence (in which case the VRU will take the learning from the activity and share that with other areas). This means that in the first instance the VRU's delivery will focus on priority areas of London and not cover all of London. It is unclear how they will choose the priority areas within London at present and therefore whether areas within Westminster will be prioritised.

### **14. Conclusion**

14.1 Knife crime (and serious youth violence) is a complex area of crime, with a multitude of differing offences being committed by persons from all spectrums of life, with a myriad of complex needs, traumas or causes involved. Tackling knife crime and serious youth violence is only ever successful when a full system multi-agency approach is taken. There are robust governance arrangements through the Safer Westminster Partnership and the Youth Crime

Prevention Partnership to prioritise multi agency effort in tackling this agenda. Operationally there are a range of activities in place to address the issues, including the underlying causes:

- Early Help Response working with schools to promote inclusion, emotional wellbeing and parenting
- Social Care addressing harmful parental behaviour and its impact on children
- Youth Offending Service addressing criminal behaviour
- IGXU tackling gang related behaviour and young people at risk of criminal exploitation
- Local Safeguarding Children’s Board leading a partnership response to map Young People at risk
- Probation focussing on offenders over 18s
- Community Safety operating with neighbourhoods, providing community engagement and working with our police partners, including around licencing
- Police disrupting and bringing to justice offenders, preventing crime and protecting victims
- Public health leading on a whole-systems approach to violence

14.2 We have some useful data about victims of knife crime and the wards where this is happening. We also know that there is a difference between the victim data and the data relating to perpetrators. The Youth Offending Service holds useful data on violent crime, including knife related incidents, and can provide a profile of first-time entrants to the criminal justice system and those repeat offenders. Less is known about the profile of offenders aged 18-25 and the relationship between offenders and victims.

14.3 The council is developing a victim analysis, by ward and against offender details - so that we can better target activity to protect victims, disrupt problematic behaviour, prevent violence, and bring offenders to justice. A performance dashboard has now been developed to assist with this and includes data from the relevant partners.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Wayne Chance McKay**  
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**APPENDICES:**

N/A

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

N/A