

**POLICE AND CRIME  
COMMISSIONER FOR  
LEICESTERSHIRE**

**ETHICS, INTEGRITY AND  
COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE**



Report of	<b>OFFICE OF CHIEF CONSTABLE</b>
Subject	<b>KNIFE CRIME AND YOUNG PEOPLE</b>
Date	<b>FRIDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2020 – 2.00PM</b>
Author	<b>T/DSUPT MICHELLE KEEN</b>

**Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Ethics, Integrity and Complaints committee with an overview of serious violence involving young people and an insight into the approach taken by Leicestershire Police.

**Recommendations**

2. The Committee is recommended to discuss the contents of the report.

**Ethical Dilemmas**

3. Should the identity of young people suspected to be involved in the habitual carrying of knives be released to specific members of the local community?

**Background**

4. Leicestershire Police in partnership with the Violence Reduction Unit and partners across LLR are working together to prevent serious violence and knife crime.
5. One element would be to develop community initiatives where the community support individuals move away from violent crime and carrying knives. Utilising an evidence-based approach this would require sharing young people's details with specific community members or groups.
6. Reliance solely on consent undermines the aims in supporting young people as many refuse to engage statutory services for a multitude of reasons, resulting in the exposure to harm and vulnerability for exploitation being retained and continuing. Sharing the young person's identity with specific community groups with appropriate safeguards enables interventions to be

put in place to support young people, reduce vulnerability and exposure to exploitation.

7. Leicestershire Police recognise that serious violence in all forms is an area of significant threat and continues to engage nationally and regionally in sharing and learning from best practice.
8. Serious violence manifests in many forms and one key area that presents significant demand and challenge relates to the increasing involvement of young people in incidents of serious violence, both as suspects and victims. Consequently, Leicestershire Police continues to develop its approach to strengthen prevention opportunities, in order to divert and support young people away from using serious violence and reduce the risk of them suffering serious harm.

### Knife Crime

9. Knife crime continues to be an issue that is seen locally and nationally due to the harm caused by any violent offence and the potential loss of life that can occur. The tragic events experienced recently, within our communities, continue to highlight that continual focus on this type of violence is needed.
10. Knife crime in Leicester saw significant increases over the last few years with the force experiencing a sustained steady decline since 2019, from an average of 220 offences a month to 180 per month. Upon the easing of Covid lockdown restrictions, the force has seen an increase in knife offences where serious harm is caused. Although knife crimes represent just over 2% of all crime reported each year the understanding of who and where is affected is fundamental to tackling these offences.
11. The key age groups for victims and offenders for knife crime continue to be young people between 12 and 24 years, which is reflected across the country. The force has developed with partners, awareness programmes that go into schools targeting young people from the age of 10. Warning Zone now has a knife input to reach all of their year 6 pupils attending the centre.
12. There are areas of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland that experience more knife crime than elsewhere, which are targeted by high profile visible policing, knife sweeps, and use of knife wands and arches.
13. The use of home office Police funding continues to provide extra capacity to have more of these operations, complete test purchase operations for locations suspected of selling knives and will see the introduction of school liaison officers in those identified areas of increased risk, to support the information exchange and assist in diverting young people away from violence. This will also assist in identifying those at risk of peer pressure or exploitation by others into carrying weapons or drugs.
14. The targeting of those most likely to carry weapons has allowed Neighbourhood Teams to approach, in some cases with partner agencies, to offer advice and highlight the dangers of carrying weapons to the individual and their family offering resources to them to try and change behaviours.

15. It is recognised that carrying a knife is a risk factor for a young person and although agencies now recognise this the resources and programmes available to deal with this type of vulnerability, and support to families, is not as advanced as familial abuse and neglect. This presents missed opportunities to break the cycle of offending seen by the police in individual escalation of offending.
16. The significant aspect of violence is having resources that identify clear advice and pathways for individuals, parents, family members and professionals to take to help someone carrying weapons or getting involved in serious crime.
17. Although the #livesnotknives campaign has been consistently used for over 3 years, it is to some communities, police led resource that deters some from accessing the website. An alternative need to be developed across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland that collates the best practice and is informed by all partnerships involved.
18. This diversion remains a challenge as gaining engagement of the individuals currently relies on the police getting a criminal justice sanction upon them, such as a final warning or conditional caution, which is not possible in many cases due to the limited involvement they have. An alternative credible approach within the community, which can approach those at risk independently from the police, may add significant opportunity to divert and support the young person away from such violence.

### **Force Approach**

19. It is recognised that serious violence and tackling organised crime remains a priority, both locally and nationally. Leicestershire Police has demonstrated its commitment to tackle such violence with the recent formation of the Violent and Complex Crime Unit (VCCU).
20. The VCCU seeks to maximise opportunities to develop existing work streams ensuring synergy with the Violence Reduction network (VRN). This will develop effective working and alignment, both internally and with external stakeholders to improve our delivery outcomes, within three core strands:
  - Prevention
  - Reduction
  - Disruption
21. The purpose of the team led by a Detective Superintendent is to focus upon violent and complex crime and specifically seeks to embed prevention, reduction and disruption throughout the organisation, to meet the following overarching objectives:
  - To prevent violent crime through effective engagement and early intervention system.
  - To reduce violent crime through targeting and problem-solving offenders. locations and victims.

- To support a public health approach to tackle causes of violent crime.
  - To deliver increased positive outcomes for violent crime.
  - To increase public confidence and satisfaction regarding violent crime.
22. Leicestershire Police remains the beneficiary of Serious Violent Crime Surge funding for the current financial year and funding through the OPCC for the development of the Violence Reduction Network, to embed long-term solutions to serious violence.
  23. The unit aligns with the current home office surge funding focus and the violent reduction network, in order to provide sufficient clarity to meet the objectives of the unit, tackling street-based violence involving people under 25 years of age.
  24. The work of the unit around prevention and reduction fully acknowledges that serious violence requires significant partnership working to address effectively. Problem solving will be at the core of the unit working with Neighbourhood Policing and Safeguarding teams in developing a whole system approach.

### **Community Engagement**

25. In 2019, the Home Office funded the implementation of the Violence reduction unit (VRU) within Leicestershire. Its purpose being to embed a local multi-agency approach, bringing together the Police, local government, education community leaders and other key partners to tackle serious violence involving young people.
26. The VRU provides strategic coordination and oversight in addition to providing investment in a number of early intervention and preventative activities. Local communities and young people are key stakeholders in the development of such interventions.
27. Leicestershire Police and the VRU work closely together aligning objectives and focus, to strengthen the approach.
28. Each Neighbourhood policing area has dedicated neighbourhood officers, who work with their communities to deliver the local neighbourhood plans, through a range of activity.
29. Each neighbourhood policing area uses community contacts to circulate messages and information to those who are either key individuals or stakeholders within our communities.
30. Community impact assessments are effectively utilised to ensure that any changes in perception or changes in crime is reflected in our organisation and community feelings are monitored
31. As work continues to strengthen the relationship with the diverse communities within Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, the willingness from community leaders and the wider community, to support our young people, is demonstrated through a number of forums.

## **Implications**

Financial: None

Legal:

Working together to Safeguard Children-Children's Act 1989

Data Protection Act 1998

Freedom of information Act 2000.

Equality Impact Assessment:

The equality act 2010 puts a responsibility upon public authorities to promote equality of opportunity to access services.

Risks and Impact: There is a risk that community confidence and satisfaction levels could fall should the organisational approach not meet public expectations.

Link to Police and Crime Plan: Links to all five strands of the PCC plan, Vulnerability, Victims, Visibility, Value for money and Viable Partnerships.

## **List of Appendices**

None

## **Person to Contact:**

D/Supt Keen- CAID- Violent and Complex Crime Unit.

Email: [michelle.keen@leicestershire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:michelle.keen@leicestershire.pnn.police.uk)