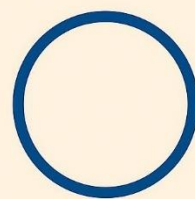


Safer Knives

Reducing Knife Harm



**Safer
Knives
Group**

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Reducing Knife Harm

**Record of the Reducing Knife Harm conference
held at the Royal College of Psychiatrists
on 20th November 2025**

**Duncan Bew, Professor John Crichton, Professor
Graham Farrell, Patrick Green, His Honour Nic Madge,
Leisa Nichols-Drew and Andy Slaughter MP**



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Supported by the Economic and Social Research Council, Leeds Social Sciences Institute.

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Preface

On 20th November 2025, the Safer Knives Group held a conference entitled *Reducing Knife Harm*. The conference was generously supported by the Economic and Social Research Council, Leeds Social Sciences Institute and hosted by the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

The objects of the *Reducing Knife Harm* conference were:

- **Policy Development.** To encourage and inform policy on the wider adoption of safer knife designs.
- **Publicity.** To raise the public and media profile of the importance of safer knife design.
- **Government Engagement.** To engage with Ministers and officials to influence legislative and regulatory direction.
- **Stakeholder Outreach.** To influence a wide stakeholder group including knife manufacturers, retailers, academics, and the public sector.

The conference was attended by 120 people, comprising a diverse mix of professionals, front-line experts and people with lived experience. The presentations and plenary contributions encompassed a wide range of knowledge and opinion. This book is an edited version of all those contributions.

Everyone involved hoped that the conference would act as a springboard for further change to reduce knife harm. We, all members of the Safer Knives Group, hope that this book will further that aim.

Duncan Bew – Consultant major trauma surgeon at King’s College Hospital, London, with first-hand experience of treating life-threatening injuries caused by knives.

Professor John Crichton – Consultant forensic psychiatrist, past chair of the Royal College of Psychiatrists in Scotland, with a longstanding research interest in homicide reduction.

Professor Graham Farrell – Professor of Crime Science, Leeds University.

Patrick Green – CEO of the Ben Kinsella Trust. Ben was 16 when he died in 2008.

His Honour Nic Madge – formerly a Circuit Judge who tried many criminal cases involving serious violence.

Leisa Nichols-Drew – Chartered forensic practitioner and Associate Professor of Forensic Biology at De Montfort University. She specialises in the forensic investigation of knife related injuries.

Andy Slaughter MP – Chair of the Justice Select Committee, a long-time advocate for legislative reform to reduce knife crime.



1. Introduction

His Honour Nic Madge, former Circuit Judge

NIC MADGE My first duty and pleasure is to pass on greetings from His Majesty, the King who is aware of this conference and has sent Loyal Greetings to the Royal College of Psychiatrists on the occasion of this conference. He wishes to convey his warmest thanks to the members of the Royal College. He is heartened to learn of the crucial work done here, and he sends and I quote “his warmest good wishes to all those who are present for a memorable event.”

So, this is going to be, in his Majesty's words, a memorable event in which we will all participate.

The Safer Knives Group campaigns for a change in kitchen knife design to reduce knife harm.

We are small informal group, but we have a wealth of different experience of knife harm: expert, professional and academic experience.

Just as the Safer Knives Group has people from different backgrounds and different views, so this conference brings together people from very varied backgrounds.

- Some people have direct experience of knife harm.
- Some have lost loved ones thru knife harm.
- Some have treated wounds.
- Some have apprehended attackers.
- Some have worked with offenders.
- Some front-line workers in the charitable sector.
- Some people here manufacture and sell knives

The aim of the conference is to give everybody the opportunity to share views and develop policy, but in discussion we hope and expect everyone to show mutual respect.

The views of Safer Knives Group members are not identical. All opinions expressed are personal views and should not be attributed to anyone else. However, we all firmly believe that knife harm is a public health issue and should be addressed as such.

We want to see a change of culture so that rounded kitchen knives, not pointed kitchen knives, become the norm. We want to see a change in consumer behaviour.

I introduced the other members of the Safer Knives Group. Let me say something about me. I was a circuit judge. I presided over many horrendous cases of serious violence involving knives. I sentenced many people for knife crime, including many attackers who caused terrible injuries. I saw many cases where, without thinking, people grabbed the nearest weapon to hand, either in a domestic argument or to take out it out onto the street. My experience as a judge was that kitchen knives were the most common lethal weapon.

That is now confirmed by official Home Office statistics which show that

- on average two people are killed by kitchen knives every week, and
- in homicides committed using a pointed weapon, over half the weapons are kitchen knives.

It is the points of kitchen knives that kill and cause life threatening injuries.

Knife crime is a complex issue. There is no single, simple solution, but a simple change in the design of kitchen knives will save lives and reduce injuries. We need to look at practical solutions.

People in this room will have differing views, but, briefly, my personal thinking is that in terms of strategy, we need to think both about

- (i) the manufacture and sale of new knives; and
- (ii) what is to be done about existing knives.

They are distinct issues.

We will hear later about the very positive, groundbreaking steps that different police forces are taking with knife surrender schemes and knife replacement schemes.

But how do we change the culture in the kitchen in relation to new knives? Some people call for a total ban on the sale of pointed kitchen knives. Personally, I would not call for a total ban at the moment. There is though a strong argument for restrictions on the display of pointed knives in shops – similar to restrictions on the display of tobacco products in shops. There is also a strong argument for a ban on the remote sale and delivery of pointed knives. Andy Slaughter proposed amendments to the Crime and Policing Bill to that effect. The amendments which I drafted are reprinted at the end of this section. The amendments were withdrawn, but the Government has promised to consider such measures in the future. Nothing is off the table.

The Dunblane killings led to changes in the law on the sale of guns. The Southport attack should be the Dunblane moment for knives.

Ideally, there should be an Industry wide agreement for manufacturers and retailers to work together to increase the supply of safer knives and to promote their sale. I would hope that this can be done by agreement. We at the Safer Knives Group have had productive contact with BHETA, the British Home Enhancement Trade Association, the UK's leading trade association for homeware. I am looking forward to the conversation between Will Jones of BHETA and Kate O'Neill, the Chief Commercial Officer of the Rayware Group later this morning.

However, every week that we wait for voluntary change, more people are killed, suffer life-threatening injuries, or are maimed by pointed kitchen knives. Although we should not speculate until the facts are known, it is significant that, according to the BBC, the man arrested for the latest mass scale knife attack earlier this month (November 2025) has also been charged with theft of kitchen knives from a well-known supermarket the day before. This is a timely demonstration of the need for a change in culture.

So, my personal view now is that the government should bring in a knife tax to make pointed knives more expensive than rounded knives. Think about the potential effect of a tax on every pointed kitchen knife over three inches long which is manufactured or imported into this country. A five-pence charge for single use plastic bags rendered them obsolete. We can debate the amount of any tax, but if every pointed kitchen knife cost, say, £20 more than every rounded knife, who would buy the pointed knives? The answer is the butchers, fishmongers, professional and expert chefs who need them. Yes,

it will be an additional expense, but a plate of fish and chips can cost £20 in London and £20 is nothing compared to the value of a life or the cost to the NHS of treating a knife victim.

The vast majority of home chefs never use the pointed ends of knives. I was looking on line last night and found a well-known supermarket advertising NINE pointed knives for £24.99. NINE pointed knives for £24.99. The people who buy cheap knives like those rarely use the points for cooking.

A knife tax would be similar in principle to the government's sugar tax which has led to a 46% reduction in the sugar contained in soft drinks affected. Nearly 90% of the soft drinks market now contains less sugar than the level at which the tax applies.

*two people are killed by
kitchen knives every week*

A tax on the manufacture/production and importation of every pointed knife over three inches long would mean that enforcement would be easier than a tax on sale. By including importation, HMRC would legally be able to seize any knives on which duty was

not paid. Licensing of retailers would be a good thing, but we would not have to wait for that before implementing a tax. Once producers and retailers have adapted, this tax should have no adverse effect on manufacture or sales. People who want to pay more for pointed knives can, but most people would simply choose to buy cheaper rounded knives. Knife sales would not be affected adversely. If anything, with the ability to advertise and openly display, the market could increase. Also, it would give British manufacturers (many of whom already produce rounded knives) a commercial advantage over foreign importers.

This is a proposal that would cost the government nothing. Indeed, it is a very small step towards filling Chancellor, Rachel Reeves's black hole.

POTENTIAL AMENDMENTS TO LEGISLATION

1. Amendment to restrict delivery of pointed knives to residential premises

() Restrictions on the delivery of pointed knives after agreements made by distance communication

(1) This section applies to any delivery of a pointed knife if the cutting edge of its blade exceeds 3 inches if

- (i) the delivery of the pointed knife is the result of an agreement made by distance communication; and
- (ii) either the delivery or the agreement for the delivery is made in the course of a business.

(2) For the purposes of this section an agreement is made by distance communication if, at the time that the agreement is made, none of the parties to the agreement is within visual sight of the others

(3) A party is not within visual sight of another if the only way that they can be seen is by use of an electronic, digital or other artificial means.

(4) A company or partnership is to be treated as being within visual sight of any other party if one or more of its employees or partners is within visual sight of the other parties.

(5) The following is an indicative list of means of distance communication

- a) Electronic mail.
- b) Unaddressed printed matter.
- c) Telephone with human intervention.
- d) Telephone without human intervention (automatic calling machine, audiotext).
- e) Videophone (telephone with screen).
- f) Any form of social media.
- g) Addressed printed matter.
- h) Letter.
- i) Press advertising with order form.
- j) Catalogue.
- k) Radio.
- l) Videotext (microcomputer and television screen) with keyboard or touch screen.
- m) Facsimile machine (fax).
- n) Television (teleshopping).

(6) A person who knowingly or recklessly causes any pointed knife to be delivered or delivers any pointed knife to either

(a) domestic premises; or

(b) a remote locker or collection point which is not supervised by a human being at the time when the pointed knife is collected

in England and Wales or Northern Ireland is guilty of an offence.

(7) For the purposes of this section domestic premises are defined as any premises which have not been assessed as liable for business rates and do not appear as such on the list maintained by the Valuation Agency Office.

(8) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months, or a fine not exceeding Level 5 on the standard scale or both.

No reputable manufacturer or retailer would be prosecuted if this amendment becomes law. Indeed, it would make it easier for reputable manufactures and retailers to market and sell rounded kitchen knives. Any home owner would still be able to purchase a pointed kitchen knife by mail order – they would simply have to pick up and collect their purchase in store where more effective face to face age verification can take place.

The indicative list is a modified version of Schedule 1 of the Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000 SI No. 2334. The three-inch length provision is the same as Criminal Justice Act 1988 section 139 (Offence of having article with blade or point in public place).

2. Amendment to prohibit the open display of pointed knives

() Prohibition of displays of pointed knives

(1) A person who in the course of a business displays any pointed knife, or causes any pointed knife to be displayed, in a place in England and Wales or Northern Ireland is guilty of an offence.

(2) The appropriate Minister may by regulations provide for the meaning of “place” in this section.

(3) No offence is committed under this section if the display is a requested display to an individual aged 18 or over.

(4) Subsections (5) and (7) apply where a person (“D”) is charged with an offence under this section in a case where the display is a requested display to an individual aged under 18.

(5) Where D is charged by reason of D having displayed the pointed knife it is a defence that—

(a) D believed that the individual was aged 18 or over, and

(b) either—

(i) D had taken all reasonable steps to establish the individual's age, or

(ii) from the individual's appearance nobody could reasonably have suspected that the individual was aged under 18.

(6) For the purposes of subsection (5), a person is treated as having taken all reasonable steps to establish an individual's age if—

(a) the person asked the individual for evidence of the individual's age, and

(b) the evidence would have convinced a reasonable person.

(7) Where D is charged by reason of D having caused the display of a pointed knife it is a defence that D exercised all due diligence to avoid committing the offence.

(8) In this section “a requested display” means a display to an individual following a particular request by the individual to purchase a pointed knife, or for information about a pointed knife.

(9) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding twelve months, or a fine not exceeding Level 5 on the standard scale or both.

(10) Nothing in this section prevents the display of rounded knives with no point.

This amendment is based upon Health Act 2009 s.21 which restricts the display of tobacco products. Legally, subsection (10) is unnecessary, but it provides helpful signalling.

3. Amendment for a knife tax

A knife tax could be introduced by the following amendment to the Finance Act 2003 (No.2).

After section 330 add a new section

Pointed knives

330A Charge on manufacture or importation of pointed knives.

(1) An excise duty (“knife tax”) is charged on every knife which

(a) is over three inches long; and

(b) has a pointed tip.

that is produced in, or imported into, the United Kingdom.

(2) There shall be charged on every such knife a duty of excise at the rate of £20.

The wording of the proposed amendment is based on the provisions for excise duty on alcohol (in the Finance Act (No.2) 2003, section 47) and petrol (in the Hydrocarbon Oil Duties Act 1979, section 6.)



2. Prevention Is Everyone's Responsibility

Leanne Lucas, Let's Be Blunt

NIC MADGE I don't need to introduce Leanne, because everyone knows Leanne. Leanne, through her campaign, Let's Be Blunt, is now one of the foremost campaigners for safer knives. So please welcome Leanne.

LEANNE LUCAS Good morning, and thank you - truly - for being here today.

Standing in a room of people who share the same mission, the same hope, and the same determination to protect others ... it means more to me than I can put into words.

My name is Leanne Lucas. And last year, my life changed forever. I survived one of the most devastating attacks our country has ever witnessed. It shook communities across the nation - and it shook my world to its core.

Before I speak about the campaign, I would like to pause and honour everyone affected by the tragedy of July 2024. They are in my thoughts today and always. I won't stand here and go through the details of what happened that day. What I will hold onto is the joy, the laughter, the happiness we shared in the moments before everything changed. Those memories remind me of what life should look like. They remind me of what every child, every family, every community deserves.

But for me, those beautiful memories sit alongside the fear, the shock, and the painful truth that terrible things can happen - even in places filled with love, even to people who are simply trying to bring others joy. That moment did not just leave scars on my body. It left deep marks on my heart. It altered the direction of my life. It gave me a purpose I never asked for - but one I now carry with everything I have.

Let's Be Blunt was born from that purpose. From a need to help others avoid the fear, the trauma, and the lifelong impact knife crime brings to individuals, families, and entire communities. It is difficult to explain how far the effects of knife crime reach. It's not something you "get over." It ripples outward - touching friends, families, neighbours, and even strangers who hear the news and feel grief, fear, or helplessness. And that's why we cannot allow ourselves to become numb - to the statistics and the constant stream of news that should never feel normal.

At the heart of Let's Be Blunt is a belief in positivity, forward thinking, and real, meaningful change. Because each of us has the power - and the responsibility - to protect our communities from knife crime. One of the simplest yet most powerful steps starts in the place we feel safest: our own kitchens. The traditional pointed-tip kitchen knife is something almost every household owns. But it is also one of the most easily accessible weapons - used in impulsive moments, during crises, or in situations that escalate far too fast. Many people do not realise that an everyday kitchen knife - the one we barely think twice about - is the one most often used in sharp-instrument homicides. It is a knife that, with nothing more than an age check, can be bought in a shop or online without anyone raising any concern. And while it is true that an object itself has no intent, once a pointed kitchen knife is used in an act of violence, lives are changed forever.

Whilst some progress is being made to ban the most extreme weapons, we must not overlook the ones that hide in plain sight. The knives that are easy to grab. Easy to conceal. Easy to misuse. The ones we leave in drawers, on the draining board, in the fancy knife block - within reach of anyone. Because we associate kitchen knives with cooking, with normal life, we have accepted them without question. But we cannot ignore the risk any longer. By simply choosing safer, rounded, blunt-tipped knives, we take a small, practical step that can have a profound impact.

Pointed-tip knives are professional tools. They belong in professional environments. For most everyday cooking, the tip serves very little purpose - if any at all. In an ideal world, if knife crime did not exist, we would not need to think twice about misuse.

Of course, we want to trust everyone - but we cannot afford complacency. Almost every everyday tool we use has evolved over time to become safer. Yet the kitchen knife, despite everything we now know about the risks, has barely changed in design. We have accepted it as 'just the way it is,' without questioning whether today's society really needs a knife with a sharp point at all.

Yet when used as a weapon, that sharp point can cause catastrophic, life-threatening injuries. No meal we cook at home requires that risk. We lock away chemicals, we hide medication, we unplug dangerous appliances - because we know harm can happen in a moment. Yet the one item capable of causing some of the most catastrophic injuries is often the one we leave in plain sight.

To create real change, we must raise awareness. We must help people understand that a safer option exists. We may not be able to prevent every act of violence - but we can absolutely reduce risk. We can reduce the chance of tragedy in those split-second moments of impulsivity. We can take responsibility for the tools we keep in our homes.

*the everyday kitchen knife ... is
the one most often used in
sharp-instrument homicides*

I never imagined something like this could happen to me. And realising that it can happen to anyone, anywhere, is what drives me to stand here today - to speak, to raise awareness, to fight for prevention.

This is not just a headline or a statistic.

This is real life. And real life needs real action. Not later - not one day - but now.

There are several simple yet meaningful ways to support the Let's Be Blunt movement:

- Start open conversations at home about knife safety, the risks posed by pointed-tip kitchen knives, and the importance of prevention. Awareness begins within our own families.
- Review the knives in your household. Know what you have, where they are kept, and who can access them. Taking stock is a powerful first step toward responsibility and safety.
- Reduce the number of knives you keep. Most homes have far more than they need, increasing accessibility in moments of crisis or impulsivity. Keeping only essential tools lowers risk.
- Choose safer alternatives by replacing pointed-tip kitchen knives with blunt-tip or rounded-tip designs. This simple switch significantly reduces the potential for severe injury while still supporting everyday cooking.

But true, lasting change requires more than individual action. It requires every sector in this room stepping forward - together.

A campaign cannot create change on passion alone. It needs partnership. It needs leadership. It needs you.

To MPs, Policymakers, and Council Leaders: Champion this campaign publicly. Ask the difficult questions in Parliament and within your local authorities. Push for safer product standards and modernised design expectations. Use your platform - nationally and locally - to bring this conversation into the spotlight and keep it there. Make this a national priority. And consider becoming a Let's Be Blunt local authority area, leading by example and showing your commitment to safer homes and safer communities.

To the Home Office: You have the power to embed the Let's Be Blunt campaign into national prevention frameworks. Your leadership can make prevention a recognised pillar of public safety and give the movement the national attention it deserves.

To retailers: You decide what reaches the shelves of our supermarkets and high streets. You can prioritise safer designs, display them prominently, and help guide the public toward responsible choices. Display campaign material and train staff to understand the importance of this change.

To manufacturers: Innovation starts with you. Lead the change. Publicly endorse the campaign. You can design products that support modern safety needs without compromising function - and lead the way for the entire industry by adopting safer standards.

To policing partners: You see the reality of knife crime every day. Your voice, your insight, and your support in championing preventative measures are vital to public understanding. Support the campaign publicly and help communities understand real risks. Join the National Safer Knife Replacement scheme. More forces working in union sends a strong message.

To knife-crime charities, educators, and community organisations: You are on the front-line of change. Your work with families, young people, and communities makes you essential partners in raising awareness and reducing risk. Share the campaign and encourage families to take the pledge.

To everyone in this room: Every one of you has influence. Every one of you has reach, a network, a platform. And every one of you has the ability to help prevent the next tragedy by sharing the campaign today.

This is not a campaign built on blame - it is a campaign built on shared responsibility, shared action, and shared hope. Prevention is everyone's responsibility.

The future won't change unless we change it - one decision, one conversation, one pledge at a time.

Let's Be Blunt - make the change, save a life, take the pledge.

NIC MADGE A really important, powerful message, Leanne. Thank you. Let, let's just take a moment before the next speaker to think quietly to ourselves about what Leanne has just said.



3. When Ronan Smiled

Pooja Kanda, OBE

POOJA KANDA When Ronan smiled, the whole world seemed to smile with him.

When he walked into a dark room, he didn't just enter - he brought light with him.

He made positive change wherever he went.

He was no other than my son, Ronan Kanda.

Ronan's life was taken by a teenage perpetrator who murdered my son, a 16-year-old who was able to buy a 20-inch ninja sword online and thrust it 20 centimetres deep into my son's chest.

These words break me every time I speak them.

But I speak them because silence protects no one.

Ronan was left to die just two doors away from our home.

My son - who never harmed anyone, never carried a knife, never joined a gang — died because this teenage perpetrator was able to buy over 25 machetes, swords, dangerous weapons with ease.

We saw them in court - horrific. He was obsessed with these weapons as they represent and enable violence and he was a self-admitted arms dealer - yes a 16 year old buying weapons and selling them on.

He collected them from the post office, and no one stopped him. Every organisation involved failed him. And I will repeat these failures over and over again until each one drastically changes for the better. I am standing here today - not defeated, but determined to see real change.

The Government is playing its part - implementing the ninja sword ban, consulting on a licensing system, strengthening the law through Ronan's Law.

But today is about you.

The people in this room.

The professionals.

The agencies.

The ones who can prevent the next tragedy.

My son didn't get a second chance - but someone else's child still can.

I am here today with my daughter, Nikita...

With Patrick, CEO of the UK's biggest knife crime charity, the Ben Kinsella Trust...

And with Southport survivor Leanne Lucas, who's campaign for blunt tip knives we fully support.

We stand here - three different stories, one shared mission to protect young lives and to challenge organisational failure.

Don't be like the organisations who failed my son.

In June 2025, 7,500 weapons were collected in the Home Office's largest amnesty scheme.

That is not just a number.

That is 7,500 chances to save a life.

Morrisons supported the Government's amnesty efforts by displaying posters in their stores informing people where they can hand in their weapons. They continue to support the Government's efforts against knife crime today.

Imagine if more retailers stepped up.

Imagine the impact.

Imagine the lives saved... the futures protected... the parents spared this pain.

And let me say this clearly: It is never too late. Join us now.

We owe this to our future generations.

We owe this to every innocent child taken too soon.

I am Pooja Kanda, OBE, mother of Nikita and Ronan.

Ronan's Law will bring greater stability by tackling the failures of online retailers.

But I cannot do this alone - I need your support, your voice, your action.

Together, we can save lives.



4. How the Government Will Halve Knife Crime

Sarah Jones, M.P., Minister of State at the Home Office

SARAH JONES I was appointed as the Home Office Minister for Policing and Crime only a few weeks ago and on my first or second day, Andy Slaughter said “there is a conference you need to come to.” I was very pleased to be able to accept.

I have been an MP since 2017. Those of you in the room who are experts will know that at that point there was a big spike in knife crime. My constituency in Croydon was affected as were many places across the country. So, when I stood for election, I said that, if I was elected, I would set up an all party group for knife crime. I did do that.

In Croydon and other places, there have been some extraordinarily awful incidents where, in many cases, young people whose whole lives were ahead of them have been killed or severely injured from knife crime. Although the numbers are going in the right direction nationally and in London, obviously the pace and the speed with which we would want to see a reduction cannot come quickly enough. Of course, any knife incident is, one too many. So, we have a huge job to do.

Those of us who have been working in this area for a long time know that knife crime numbers go up and down over time. There are different drivers and different things that are happening in society that impact on those numbers. Of course, when we had COVID, the numbers for obvious reasons went down, but they have gone up since.

So, when we got into government last year, it was a real priority for the Prime Minister, and for all of us, that we should take knife crime very seriously and try to set ourselves a target to meet.

A public health approach to knife crime is important. We need to think about prevention, as well as about policing. The previous government introduced some things like violence reduction units and putting youth workers into areas, which were good and which we welcome, but we felt that there needed to be a proper strategic approach to the problem. I feel that if you don't have a sense of direction and a target and something that you are heading towards, it is harder to get all the bits of government to work together in the way that you want them to. So, we have a target to half knife crime in a decade. That is a very stretching target. We believe as does everyone in the room, I suspect, that violence is not inevitable.

You can do things to reduce violence and we should be doing them across all the different departments within government, not just the Home Office. So, when we came to government last year - and we were thinking in opposition too - we started thinking about how we could pull the different strands together and attack the problem head on.

One of the advantages that we have is that our Prime Minister cares very much about this. He has a constituency, which is not unaffected by knife crime. It has always been something within his background: something that he has been very interested in. So, he held his summit last year with the

wonderful members of the coalition: some of whom are in this room. So, we have the advantage that Downing Street and the Prime Minister want to help us pull the right levers across government. That has been really good. The members that I know value the coalition. It is really significant because we have a broad range of people who can really help us drive the solutions that we need to be heading towards.

In terms of what we have been doing, there are big pockets of work that it would be helpful for me to talk through. Much of it you will know about, but there is a lot of activity.

I know you are talking a lot about how we design knives as well which is also something that we are looking at. I would be pleased to hear anything that comes out of today.

The first package of work is around access to knives. Of course, we understand that people can get access to kitchen knives relatively easily and that it will always be the case that people can access dangerous weapons, but there is, we believe, a lot that we can do to limit the access to those knives and to try to control them better and indeed to stop selling certain types of knives that have no place in our country. There is no argument as to why you might need them.

*a public health approach
to knife crime is important*

So obviously we began with the ninja sword ban and a surrender scheme over this summer. It was really successful. And the mobile surrender bin which has also been really successful. I have four bins in my constituency. The surrender schemes that that have

happened since the last election have got us up to 60,000 knives taken off the streets. I think 60,000 knives off the streets is pretty good. I am really proud that we've managed to do that. Obviously, a lot of that was retailers handing in knives when those knives became illegal, but also people handing them in off the street.

We know of very sad cases where mothers are ringing up saying, "I have discovered a knife under my son's mattress. What am I to do?" There are now places where you can go without going directly to the police if that is what you want to do. You can hand in knives and that has to be a really good thing.

We are increasing the penalties for illegal knife sales. For example, if you sell knives to somebody underage, we are increasing the penalties for that – which I think is really important. There is a new offence of holding a knife with intent to commit violence. When you talk to the police, they talk about this, and the struggle that they have where somebody might have knives, but they have not committed an offence. So, you cannot always take the action that you would want. There is a new offence, imposing duties on people who are selling knives to report if there is a bulk sale. Obviously if somebody is buying a large quantity of knives that should be raising flags. Why on earth would they be doing that? So, there is a duty to report that.

Ronan's law. Hopefully, you all know about how we try to stop the sale of knives and stop the use of knives. There is a whole range of measures that involve stricter rules for online sellers, including strengthening the age verification process at the point that you buy a knife and at the point that it is delivered.

There are new powers to require tech companies, online companies, to remove illegal knife sales from their platforms. This was something that the previous government looked at. We wanted to go further. There need to be consequences with the tech companies if they are doing, those on line sales.

Then there is a national investigation centre that is really focused on the online sale of knives and trying to really disrupt the grey market for knives.

So that is the whole package around access to, and the sale of, knives.

There is then a whole package around policing and the powers that the police need to do the job that they need to do. We have provided funding to the police to do some specific pieces of work that are really interesting and showing great success.

The first one is the knife enabled robbery task force, which is a bit of a mouthful, but the knife enabled robbery task force has looked at the top seven forces in terms of knife crime. This week I have met with all the police and crime commissioners or the mayors and the police chiefs who are overseeing this work. It really has been very successful in those areas.

Prior to setting up the task force knife crime was increasing by 14%, and it has now, on average, reduced by 10%. So, we have not just stopped the increase we have reduced it. There has been a particular success on the issue in the West Midlands. There, they have seen a 30% reduction, and there are some amazing things that they are doing.

But fundamentally, it is about putting in place real leadership, driving activity from the top, being clear that this is an absolute priority for everybody. Increasing the intelligence work, particularly around people who are repeat users or offenders or habitual holders of knives. How we monitor them, target them and make sure there is intelligence on them.

There is a lot of really good work as well going on to try to move people away from knife crime. So, identifying who these people are and then offering whatever it might be in terms of mentoring or other interventions to support them.

But taken all together, there has been some quite incredible work and we really want that to become good practice across the whole of the country. But in these particularly high areas, these seven areas of the country where knife crime is highest, we are seeing really good success, which is amazing.

They are also using quite good mapping technology. It can help us map incidents. There is a policing strategy called the Hotspot Programme, which really is helping. The Home Office has provided about £65 million to map every single part of the country so that we can see exactly where the really high levels of knife crime are. This means that you can focus policing into those areas. Through Hotspot policing, we are essentially paying for police time in the areas where there is the highest incidence of violent crime. Again, that is really successful. It targets other forms of crime as well, but it's very useful when it comes to knife crime.

Then there is the whole package around prevention, which as we know is absolutely crucial. This is how we are going to get to the heart of the problem - and the package around children as well. At the moment, I think the figure is about a thousand children in the last year who have been found with a knife who have had no intervention whatsoever.

Now, you know, that the bar for a conviction and a sentence is very high with young people, but to do nothing whatsoever for a thousand people found in possession of a knife seems to us to be completely wrong. So, we are going to be changing the system so that there are options. with a child found in possession of a knife, with a range in terms of severity. But there has to be a referral to YOT. When we implement this, there will have to be an intervention.

I had a case of a boy who was killed in the most horrific circumstances, and I think a lot about what happened to him. One of the things that both the police and the youth workers in the local area said

to me, after he was murdered, was that he had been found in possession of a knife previously. He had involved himself just too far to be able to get out. The youth workers in the area had tried. Lots of people had tried. He got himself too far into a very, very violent lifestyle. Essentially, he had been coerced, as a young person into a life of crime. He had been found possession of a knife and there had not been those interventions that could perhaps have pulled him away. That cannot be right. I don't think anybody would disagree with that. So, we just have to make interventions happen.

Obviously, we need to work with our colleagues in the Ministry of Justice and probation, and we need to understand the landscape, and make sure it works, but that is a really important change.

We also have a County Lines programme, which is another Home Office funded programme that is targeting the very nasty people who run the county lines networks across our country. We know there are a lot of young people involved who are coerced into, groomed into crime. They are having to take drugs across county borders. The risk of knife crime in those cases is really high because of the violence that is systemic within the drug landscape. So, the County Lives programme is targeting those people who are not the ones carrying the drugs across the country, but the next layer up, these serious organised criminal gangs who are coordinating this approach. It has been really successful. But one of the things that is a core part of that programme is to make sure we are referring children when we come across them as part of this work, and we are referring them into services. Since that programme started, so that's a bit more than a year, we have referred over 3,000 vulnerable people and many children into safeguarding to support them, which again is an opportunity to try to pull people out of the situation that they are involved in.

We are also changing the law around County Lines. There are three laws in particular that I should flag. One is a new offence of child criminal exploitation, which hasn't existed before. All the children's organisations we work with have called for this for a long time. We tried to introduce it in previous legislation. Now we are doing it through the Crime and Policing Bill. Also, an offence of plugging, which is where you make, often a child ... I don't know how to say it in a delicate way. The third is cuckooing where you have vulnerable people who are often drug addicts themselves, and their home is being used to sell drugs. We know around 14,500 children are being criminally exploited in this way.

So, changing the law is one step, but we are going to have to do a lot of work with young people in order to try to prevent them getting involved in the first place.

I know there is a huge array of different interventions across the country. It is a really good evidence base building on what works and what doesn't work. We need to stick to that evidence base.

One of the aspects of the prevention work that we are leading at the Home Office is around prevention partnerships. This is really interesting work. In all my experience in Croydon, what most people say is, we know who these kids are: it is just that we have not managed to grip hold of them. That is the emerging work in this partnership programme where we are basically looking at young people who have been arrested but not charged. So, if you've been into the system, you are kind of on the edge of the system, but you have not actually been charged. If you look at them, there are thousands of these young people who are not getting any intervention or support at all. No bit of the state is trying to support them. So, there is this whole cohort of people who are right on the edge. We need to find a way to capture them to try to offer them support to get them out of the situations that they find themselves in.

Then on broader prevention, we have a programme which is now being run by DCMS, the Department of Cultural Media and Sports, looking at youth, young future hubs. The idea came from lots of conversations when we were in opposition, but the starting point of it was that we used to have Sure

Start for very young children and their parents. Having a place where there could be lots of different kinds of support for young people in one place would be advantageous. That is what the hubs are designed to do. We are doing the first phase of them at the moment. DCMS are leading on that.

There is a huge amount of work going on. Just to conclude with the principles here. The first is that we do not believe knife crime is inevitable and we think that we can tackle it. We need to do that with all the people in the room and many more who have a huge evidence base and huge experience, who can help us navigate where we take what will always be limited resources - where we are able to focus those resources most effectively. Of course, policing is an important part of that. Prevention is an equally important part of that. That means working harder to try to get government departments, whether it is the Department of Education or the Ministry of Justice or the Department of Health to all engage with this programme and to come together. I think the coalition is an incredibly powerful body to help us do that, linking in with the Prime Minister and making sure he's holding all of us to account to deliver the reductions that we want to see.

*knife crime is not inevitable
... we can tackle it*

And the last thing to say is that the evidence from the last year shows knife murders are down 18%, knife crime overall is down 5%. In the areas where we focus the knife enabled robbery task force, much bigger figures. These things are possible if you do the right things.

Thank you. So, I will stop talking and take some questions.

NIC MADGE Thank you very much. Sarah. That is very positive. We have over a hundred people here from a huge variety of backgrounds and the discussions that we have had so far have been very positive.

We have a few minutes for questions to the Minister.

QUESTION I run a charity for young people all over UK. The charity is called the Changing Lives Foundation Charity. My slogan is "If you can't get the mind off the streets, you can't get them off the streets." It don't matter what we do. If you cannot get their mind off the streets, these young people, you can't get them off the streets. I've been running this charity for 13 years, and I'm on the streets. I believe in consistent mentorship. I believe in consistent education. I believe we need to go out, go out there to save these young people. Why? Because with the way things are, there's a lot of groomings going on as we speak. And if we don't take the stand to do what we need to do, we're not gonna change things. The government banned machetes and stuff like that. There's a man who's called Farron. He takes knives from young people on the streets. But when you take the knife off them, you just leave them like that, that won't change nothing. These young people, they need us to stand up for them.

My question is, why isn't the Government taking our young people seriously, like putting our young people first and looking at this knife crime issue as a big national issue, cancerous in our society?

SARAH JONES I am not going to pretend for one minute that we've done everything that we should on any level, but I genuinely think that having a target to halve knife crime is quite an extraordinary one to try and deliver and to try and achieve. We won't do that unless we do all the right things. We have made some good progress in the first year, but we need to go a lot further.

It is of course, the case that there are underlying issues in terms of young people's lives, the opportunities that we are giving them, the lives that they're leading, the things that they are doing

where we need to be looking at the education system, the health system, the employment system, the careers advice, all of these things. And, you know, I would like to hope that is something that we are doing. But clearly people face enormous challenges.

In my constituency in Croydon, we have the highest number of young people in any London borough, and we have a lot of people who are living in completely substandard accommodation and housing that isn't a home on any stretch or any definition, schools that are struggling in some areas to do what we need them to do. And very little advice in terms of futures. For me, it is a huge national priority. And I think for the Prime Minister it is too. Are we doing enough? No, of course we're not. We need to go and do more, but I think we've got some really good building blocks, some really good evidence of what actually works with young people to get them away from these situations when they're already in them. But is there a huge more amount to do? Absolutely, there is.

DAVE GILBRIDE Violence Reduction Unit, Greater Manchester. It's just comment really. We are facing a period of great risk in terms of the great advances that we've made in reducing violence and in supporting young people because the lack of confirmation of any funding means we are losing some of our brilliant youth workers at the moment.

We have a navigator service in Greater Manchester, which is fantastic. They're up for an award tonight. It's a children's place. And some of those people who provide those interventions are leaving because we can't confirm any funding for them. So yes, we've made loads of advances over the years, but we're at a real period of risk now in losing a lot of our grassroots organisations and youth workers who are starting to make that massive difference. I'm sure a lot of our colleagues, my friends in the room here would be saying exactly the same.

SARAH JONES Yes, I completely hear that, and I completely understand it, and I can't fix it overnight. I totally understand the frustration. The financial situation is enormously challenging. We are going through the allocations process at the moment in terms of police funding and of the Home Office funding. We all know that there isn't money to throw around.

What I'm really serious about in terms of police reform is that we are going to introduce a white paper on policing very shortly. And that is going to save us a lot of money because a lot of the systems within policing are really inefficient. Every police officer will tell you that. But without going through that process and reforming the system, we're not going to free up the money. And without equally building the economy, so we've got people earning more and paying more taxes so that we are able to have the money for public services. We have to do both of those things. And those things we know are not going to happen by tomorrow. So, I completely hear what you're saying, and we are doing what we can, but there isn't much money to use.

NIC MADGE Sarah, thank you very much. We all recognise your personal commitment. This is a serious and complex issue. There is no simple solution. We all have an obligation to work together to see what we can do to improve matters. So, Minister, thank you very much indeed for your time.



5. Knife Crime: The Police Perspective

Commander Stephen Clayman, National Policing Lead for Knife Crime

COMMANDER CLAYMAN Thank you and good morning. Thank you for the invitation to speak today. As you have heard I am the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) lead for Knife Crime.

I am going to share some thoughts on what we are doing within the national knife crime portfolio: what we are doing now: where we hope to be in the next year or so: and some general thoughts on how we tackle the issue of knife related crime.

I speak to you today during our Sceptre week. It happens twice a year across England and Wales. It demonstrates what policing is doing to tackle knife enabled crime. It highlights enforcement activity and how we work with partner agencies, schools and volunteer organisations throughout the whole year. It showcases it in this week.

The Sceptre that is running at the moment has an additional focus this week on retailers, traditional shops with a focus on responsible retailing, with the goal of preventing knives being sold to children.

My National Knife Crime portfolio has quite a broad membership with representatives from most forces, voluntary sector, academics, and of course other agencies like Border Force, the Crown Prosecution Service, and of course the Home Office.

Whilst each force has its own knife crime strategy, the NPCC portfolio is there to promote best practice and deliver a plan that is set against four pillars, which you are pretty familiar with. They are protect, prevent, pursue, and prepare. It essentially covers things like weapons detection technology, policy, practice, training, guidance, looking at how we update legislation, where we feel it is needed and understanding what works in the preventative space.

There are other NPCC portfolios to work with here too, but we do work very closely, as you can imagine, with the Home Office to provide policing advice, particularly for new knife crime laws, some of which are coming into force shortly. I will talk about that.

I am not going to go into too much detail about safer knives because you are going to be hearing more about this today. What I can say is that this has the working group's full support. I have seen the evidence and it is compelling. I am often asked if trying to introduce something like this and knife design is an impossible task. There are too many knives, but obviously you have heard what Leanne said. My response as well is that just because it feels like a challenge, it is not a reason to stop doing it. It takes a long time. That is fine, but every change is positive and potentially life changing.

So, here is a quick question. Rhetorical. What is knife crime? Now I pose this question as it is quite important to understand what knife crime is and what it isn't. It is not an offence per se except for knife possession. The use of a knife tends to be an aggravating feature of many other crimes. For example, a knife enabled robbery, knife enabled assault and that includes domestic related incidents

and of course homicide. So, when we talk about tackling these sorts of crimes, traditional approaches will always make a difference. Forces are always driving at better prevention, detection of these crimes and, along with others, tackling the underlying elements that generate them. Each force area has a different knife crime profile. So, London, for example, is very different to Avon and Somerset, as you can imagine. The driver of knife enabled robbery in one area may be aggravated shoplifting and in another may be connected with school children going to and from school.

*limiting the availability
of knives is key to harm
reduction*

One common area though is how we look at habitual knife carriers. Those who carry them frequently often overlap between being a perpetrator and a victim. It is complicated, especially when you take in additional dynamics, such as criminal markets, gang affiliation, exploitation and county lines. But police crime recording and how data is presented are also really important. When

statistics talk about overall knife crime, this includes all of the above. It does not distinguish between whether a knife is actually used or threatened or not seen at all. You might say that does not matter when you look at the impact on a victim. That is true to some extent, but it is an important context when we describe knife related crime and injury, which is often lower than the public may expect.

How that narrative is played out responsibly in mainstream or social media channels is significant. They often misrepresent the level of injury from knives using the overall data to infer the number of actual stabbings. I have mentioned this because it can be a narrative that may lead some young people particularly to feel more unsafe and unprotected, which may fuel their belief that carrying for protection is the right thing to do, especially if their peer group is doing so. I have simplified a really complex problem, but if you are going to present the data, you have got to do so responsibly and as accurately as possible. The last point is a work in progress and data from police systems will be varied. Through the national working group we are trying to make some changes to capture better data for police recorded crime. Was a knife seen or not? Was it used or not used? Also more importantly, what type of knife? This is a challenge given the different systems being used. I have to say that the Met is leading the way here. I am confident that over time the data will be better, but how that police data is then incorporated into nationally reported data is equally important and a challenge. It is subject to further discussion with the Home Office.

I explained how knife crime traverses different crime types. Apart from the obvious enforcement activity, what exactly can we do to tackle the knife carrying aspect of a crime? For me there are two key things. Firstly, tackling the belief that someone feels that they need to carry a knife in the first place. Secondly, if they are seeking to find a knife, how to limit availability. For me, this will ultimately always be the key to that longer term reduction of knife enabled crime. That decision to pick up a knife either from home, or to buy one, is often quite complex. I will not do it justice now, neither am I the expert, but what I do know from my policing experience is that the decision to arm yourself would be based upon what is happening to you and to those around you, either from a direct or perceived threat. If you are someone already involved in criminality, then the desire to carry a knife arises out of necessity to protect yourself or a criminal commodity or to threaten others. This is a group that is already on the path to serious injury or incarceration.

Yet there are things that could be done if the intervention is both timely and effective. It can be expensive, but organisations like the Youth Endowment Fund, who I know are here today, will provide evidence of what works. But the delivery choices will often come down to money.

More than that, fixing one issue invariably leads to recognition that wider systems need fixing too, which in the longer term is probably exactly what is needed. I will come back to that. You then have a group of people, often younger, that are not actively involved in criminality but have experienced or know someone who has experienced violence. They may see violent content regularly streaming to their phones, all building up a belief that they are at risk, leading many to carry for self-protection. This is where organisations like the Ben Kinsella Trust, Street Doctors, Premier League Foundation, and so many others, look to educate before someone finds themselves arrested or worse.

I have not yet talked about violence and use of knives in a domestic setting, but the dynamics here are different to what I have just described and do need different strategies. What is clear though is that the type of household knife available could make a huge difference in terms of survivability should a spontaneous situation occur and where that knife is a focus of use. It is certainly true that the kitchen knife can be taken from home and is often used to threaten or injure. So, any longer-term design change will limit its use in the future.

Of interest though, there is some previous academic work that suggests that children and young adults will also make choices based upon the attractiveness, status or threatening nature of a knife, such as a zombie style or a machete. This goes in hand with its affordability, its accessibility, and, of course, its availability. I want to concentrate on where they get those knives from and what we have discovered and are doing in respect to tackling the supply of those knives.

Earlier this year, I conducted an independent review into the online sale of knives on behalf of the previous Home Secretary, which has been published and has a number of recommendations. The review highlighted the ease with which knives, including prohibited ones, are still available to children and young people, particularly through what we have termed grey market sellers. These are people who use social media channels to circumvent traditional retailers and legal safeguards. In addition to this, though, regular retailers are also selling knives, unwittingly or otherwise to young people who have provided fake identification and then, when delivered, additional checks are not sufficient to identify the sale to an under 18 or the person who is on the order form. We have seen too many tragedies where this is the backdrop as to how a killer got their weapons.

Now I will take you through a few of the key recommendations. If you want to read more, it is available on the gov.uk website. Two of the recommendations were quickly included by the Government in the forthcoming Crime and Policing Bill, which is great. This relates to age verification, at point of sale and delivery, along with a requirement for retailers to report bulk sales. Why is this necessary? Because we have examples of grey market sellers buying 500 knives from one retailer, which they have then resold over social media channels. The retailer has absolutely no statutory responsibility to refer to an agency. This will change. When it comes to age verification, it is clear that many systems are simply not robust enough. As I said, there are examples of where this has gone horribly wrong with children using fake ID and, say, a parent's payment details. We have advised that this must extend to delivery. At present, this should be verified at the doorstep, but there is no confidence that this is consistently applied. This will change and it is likely that the person ordering will have to be the person receiving the goods and will need to prove that at the doorstep. This will have an impact on couriers, and no doubt delivery costs, but we feel it is a price worth paying.

Another key recommendation is that retailers, and this is both online and traditional retailers, should be licenced to sell knives. At present, knife market sellers are completely unregulated. With that licence would come a condition of responsible retailing, record keeping, bulk and suspicious sales reporting, and of being good character to sell them in the first place, which believe me, in some cases, is not the case. This will be coming out for consultation soon. If we pass this into law, it will ultimately

mean that anyone who is unlicensed in England or Wales selling knives over the internet, social media, in a boot sale or over the shop counter will be breaking the law.

This has another positive effect and picks up another aspect of the review. It also means that social media and tech companies will be required to remove any content promoting the sale of a knife on their platforms other than official licensed retailers. This is quite significant considering that the removal of content and detection is currently influenced by global policies which do not currently adequately cater for this. From conversations that I have had directly with these social media companies, they are listening and policing has a good operational relationship when it needs to. Ideally though, we would like to see this content selling knives removed before it is seen by the public by algorithms to remove violent content, especially those promoting the use of knives. We are not there yet, and we are not the only ones talking to them. No doubt, this will limit supply in England and Wales

*we cannot arrest our
way out of the problem*

However, there is another threat that does still exist and that is from overseas. This was also picked up on the review and is the subject of ongoing work. It includes working closely with UK Border Force and government agencies who have a means to scan and intercept packages. It is a serious issue as sites in the USA and China provide

access to knives, which may include those that are also still prohibited by law here. If they are not intercepted at the border, they may make their way into the hands of individuals or these grey market sellers. We have seen this.

One of the more pressing recommendations for me though, is how all these elements get drawn together. The review highlighted the need for much better coordination, not just between policing and government agencies, but industry too. The proposal to set up a National Knife Crime Coordination Centre was supported by Government who provided some funding up until March next year. What will the Centre do now and into the future? Essentially the National Centre will look to identify and disrupt these grey market sellers in the first instance. That can be done through covert investigation and referring to relevant police forces for enforcement. This is happening now and since April grey market sellers have been disrupted through arrest, accounts taken down and content removed. The true scale of the grey market sellers is not really known. The team is based regionally but coordinated centrally. It is already making a difference as not every force has this capability. The sellers, quite frankly, do not respect geographic boundaries.

The review found that Border Force referrals to police for packages that were intercepted were not consistently dealt with. Referrals will come through the Centre for allocation and tracking. When bulk referrals are in operation, it will be the Centre that will receive the notifications, allowing this to be analysed, picked up, and potentially further action may to be taken. The Centre will also have a big role in working as a system lead, working with other agencies. That includes Trading Standards. It includes Ofcom and it will be a place for regular contact touch points with social media and tech companies to build better practice and protection for the future and trying to make online spaces safer when it comes to content relating to weapons and violence. Should the recommendations for licensing come into law, the Centre will no doubt look to provide guidance to both industry, the public and across law enforcement. This includes existing legislation, policy and practice. The Centre does really become that system lead and a one stop shop for tackling knife related crime.

I should add one caveat though. The continuation of the Centre beyond March 26th does depend on government funding which is yet to be announced. We are in the hands of the Home Secretary. Simply

put, without the Centre's response, I fear this problem will remain fragmented and, in my view, less effective.

To close, really when I am talking about knife related crime and reducing harm, you will often hear me say “we cannot arrest our way out of the problem”. That is a quote from 2012, which some of you will be familiar with. Secondly, it will take longer term problem-solving action to do so. To be clear, the message is as relevant today as it ever has been. But the question for me is why it does not always appear to be perceived, or, if it is, why we are not always seeing the progress we would like. Yes, the police will always look to take action against those who threaten or use violence, particularly using bladed weapons. That is what policing is here for, to protect the public and stop criminals. Yes, we are doing more to tackle the ease of supply, especially online. I am confident in time it will be much harder to buy some of the really intimidating weapons and there would be more regulation around the whole market, but still, the narrative of prevention as an imperative does not always appear to be the key message we are hearing. I have always said that attacking the root causes will require a generational, probably societal change along with commitment from successive governments over many years, not terms of office.

My thoughts on this interestingly were reinforced by an article I read recently by Professor Stan Gilmour on the Politics of Crime Prevention. He highlights what he describes as a narrative tension between preventative justice and retributive populism. That can naturally affect how politicians, for example, may respond to the demands of media and public, where we tend to focus very much on enforcement. Perhaps this makes better news. Perhaps it breeds better confidence, he says, from the public. I would also suggest it is not helped by media reporting and social media posts, which can often whip some people up into a frenzy with words like “epidemic” and “society is broken”. The article references an almost opposite model in the Netherlands and how they have inculcated a preventative approach in both political discourse and action. Over time, quite some time, they have seen some success. We know the value of work on an evidence base, yet we often stick to the same approach. Why is it, Professor Gilmour asks, that charities must struggle each year to fund programmes, which the evidence says can work? Is it because the accompanying narrative appears too soft on crime? It is more difficult to prescribe quick success, but, let me be clear, those who present the greatest risks should be tackled decisively and effectively. We should understand where the groups of people most affected are. That is both victims and perpetrators. Again, they overlap. That way, any investment around underpinning support and infrastructure has the best chance of making a difference.

When we talk about young people and knife crime, it is not all young people affected. We must allow them a voice in this too. This is fundamentally more than diversion. It must be a carefully thought-out system change with sufficient longevity of investment spanning sectors who are joined up in its planning and delivery. No doubt, it will help with more than just knife crime.

I accept that what I have said is aspirational, perhaps even naive, but simply nothing else in my view will ultimately do. I am pretty sure that the upfront costs will be paid back over time. We know how much crime and punishment costs, but it is a tough message to sell. If we do not try, we will be standing here in years to come saying the same thing. We owe it to those most affected to do this.

Thank you.

ALAN BACON I am from No Point Knives. I thought Ronan's Law had come into force and that all the retailers now have to tell you about bulk buys.

COMMANDER CLAYMAN That is absolutely right, and we have Pooja here so that it is part of it, but it is going through Parliament as we speak. So, it is not in law yet. It probably will not be until next

summer potentially with the way that things work with the Royal Assent, but it is coming in. That, and more robust for age verification. The register for licensing retailers will be coming out in the consultation. It is coming out imminently and that will give everyone a chance to feedback.

BRUCE HOLDER Fighting Knife Crime, London Stephen, you mentioned investment and where it might have a better chance of making an impact. We read an awful lot about one pound invested in a child, saves four, even six pounds, to the national purse. What would you say would be the greatest investment, the most important investment that could be made to prevent the topic that we are talking about?

COMMANDER CLAYMAN Well, I think, as I alluded to it, it is certainly not exclusively enforcement. I do think that investment is in those early years, and it is not just about intervention, is so important. I think it is more structural and that throughout the services that deliver, which is why I talk about different services, if you get these things right, it will not just be knife crime that will be helped here. It does sound very aspirational, but it is true. That long-term investment has to be the only way. For me, it has to be a cross-party thing that we grip and then just carry through. This could take twenty years. It could take longer, but unless we start doing it

In fairness to the current government, they have the Knife Crime Team. They do work across government departments, which is really good. That is good to hear, but I am not quite sure how effective it is yet because it needs more buy-in in my opinion. I know a lot of people talk about Scotland and public health approach, but there are elements of that which have been proven to be successful. But it takes a lot of planning and a lot of buy-in to get there. I should add though, the quote from Professor Stan Gilmour was from your publication.

DAVE GILBRIDE Greater Manchester Combined Authority Violence Reduction Unit. In terms of the work that has been done and proposed, intercepting knives and perhaps prosecuting those that are selling them, are there any plans, if there is an individual who has ordered a knife, for an intervention, not necessarily prosecution, maybe using our youth navigators or another service to try to understand why that person has ordered that knife and prevent them getting involved in further issues?

COMMANDER CLAYMAN That is a really good question. It is part of the Centre's response. When we get the bulk knives data or a referral from Border Force, we are not quite sure how it is going to be presented. If you order a knife and it gets intercepted, if it is prohibited, it obviously gets retained. We will also notify the force. If it is a knife which is not prohibited, they will send it on and we will be notified. That is the bit where we are not yet good enough. That is the bit the Centre will pick up for exactly that reason. Either there is a criminal offence, or, from a safeguarding perspective, we will link in with local forces and make sure they are looking at the whole picture, not just the local force.

The review talks about the grey market. They have sold thousands of knives, and, of course, they do not keep order lists. They just sell them on social media. The retailers will keep a list of who they are selling to and we can use that as a method, but it is a tricky one to grapple with, which is why we think better central coordination will make a difference. It will still be for the force to refer to people like yourselves and talk about the fourteen year-old who ordered a Zombie style knife. There needs to be an intervention even if they have not used it in anger.



6. Knife Harm: The View from a Health Care Perspective

Duncan Bew, Major Trauma Surgery Consultant, King's College Hospital, London.

Introduction

DUNCAN BEW I would like to illustrate the context of knife-related harm from a healthcare perspective and, as was alluded to earlier on, this is my personal view not that of my employer. As with other discussions today it is about sharing perspectives to help us to collaborate, understand and address what is a very complex problem.

We do not have simple solutions, and the language we use needs to be accurate, consistent and used to address and convey accurately the real issues, not entrench dogma or stigma to fit a narrative.

There has been a huge amount of work done on all sides within the healthcare sector, and also within the police and criminal justice system as well as within councils and the community and many charitable organisations: this demonstrates how important this issue is and that it needs to be addressed cross-sector.

You mentioned Professor Stan Gilmore and all the fantastic work in Thames Valley. Many police officers I know across the country have been working to address knife crime for a long period of time with consistent themes adopted from the most successful community collaborations, and an understanding that we cannot convict our way out of this problem.

With intervention we can save lives, but we need prevention to be able to save the whole community.

The approach needs to be multifaceted: it needs to be multi-agency. It needs to be understood that the threat often changes. It needs a different focus relevant to different circumstances. Culturally credible community engagement is vital. It is not easy and we need to work together, not apart. We need to share solutions, not covet them.



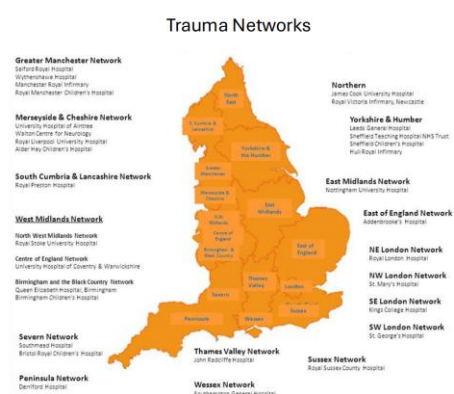
This picture was taken from the helipad at 4 a.m. at King's when I was about to receive a patient. We live in a beautiful country and we do have amazing medical resources. We live in a very beautiful city and it is always important to have the perspective that 83% of interpersonal violence in the world happens within low to middle income countries. But nevertheless, we have tragic things that happen on our doorstep in our communities, and we need to do more to prevent them.

This patient was someone over the age of forty who had been the victim of a domestic stabbing, using a kitchen knife. My previous patient that night had been injured in an act of deliberate self-harm using a kitchen knife. When we discuss the injuries that result from knives, it is important to realise that we care for victims with intentional criminal, self-harm, and accidental injury, all of which encompass harm with a common weapon. Availability, as well as the design of knives, has consequences to life changing injuries and lethality. How we accurately record these injuries and the language we use is crucial to reflecting the reality of harm, and the true impact and success of any intervention.

Trauma Networks

Trauma networks of care that exist all over the country have a hub and spoke model of major trauma centres with trauma units feeding into those and in addition smaller local emergency hospitals. Prior to the formation of trauma networks, we only had three major trauma centres in the UK: at the Royal London, Stoke and Oxford.

Following a review entitled *Trauma Who Cares?* which looked at the disparities in access to trauma care across the country, there was a conclusion that we needed to move towards hospitals that could deal with trauma in a specialist way rather than hospitals full of individual specialties: that sometimes meant that patients fell between the gaps in service and did not get the same quality of care. Trauma care importantly now focuses on how we can provide better quality of care from the point of wounding all the way through to rehabilitation.



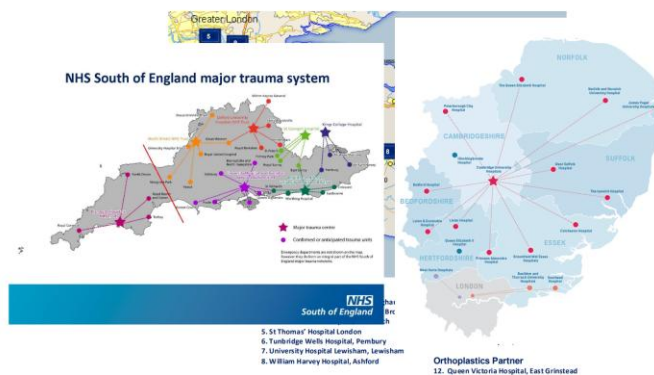
How we define success within our systems of care as within our criminal justice system and education is crucial.

Data Challenges

The data publicised in the press often talks about a major trauma centre or a trauma unit or a hospital interchangeably. They are not the same. Many of our networks also have different levels of inclusivity in terms of who will stay in the network and who will be brought to the major trauma centre. The ambulance services themselves often have different standard operating practices in terms of who will be triaged on the basis of those criteria. The movement of patients and the dynamics of where they

are in the system, depending on where they were wounded or injured in different ways, can be different in different hospitals and networks.

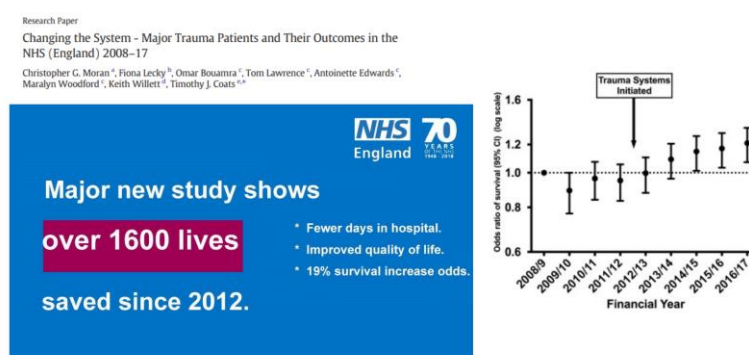
For example, some trauma unit hospitals see almost as many major trauma patients as half of the MTCs in the country do, even though they are local hospitals because of their capability or potentially because of its geography. It is important to consider these factors in targeting resources for prevention at a local level.



Some 90% of the patients presenting at some of the more rural major trauma centres are from a fall from a standing height. It is a very different proportion of trauma that we see in some centres, but frail patients themselves also have important vulnerabilities when it comes to penetrating injuries, due to increased risk of accidents, self-harm and elder abuse. Future safeguarding assessments should include the assessment of harm from domestic knives in their possession alongside important checks such as mobility and other safeguarding assessments prior to community discharge.

Defining Success

There has been at least a 20% improvement in survival of the most seriously injured patients since the formation of the major trauma centres, but survival alone, although clearly very important, should not be considered alone to define success.



I would argue that survival and rates of conviction alone are also too hard and extreme as endpoints as markers of success in prevention, and the appreciation of the mental, physical and financial impact of life-changing injuries on families and society is crucial in prevention of cycles of violence. Whether something is life changing or not is in turn very variably assessed in our justice system and different police forces have different definitions. For example, in many forces the loss of the use of a limb is insufficient to count as life changing unless the patient has required an amputation or requires 24/7 care.

Psychological Impact

We have patients who have many different life-changing injuries who survive with lasting consequences both physically and psychologically and we need to think about the impact on families and how people return to their lives, society, and places of work.

Despite the success of modern trauma systems, we still have a challenge when it comes to exsanguinating major haemorrhage and the ability to save the lives of people who have devastating penetrating injuries, particularly those injuries in parts of the body where you cannot easily compress.

Non-compressible injuries, particularly to the torso, the armpit, the root of the neck, the groin and the central part of the torso are anatomical locations where you can get penetration to an organ or a vascular structure and rapidly exsanguinate.

The ongoing harm for survivors and the psychological impacts of these injuries that we see are quite often devastating, but often the way that we appreciate, evaluate and provide medical support for this aspect of care is currently under resourced or funding often limits care to a specific patient cohort, rather than equitable access.

Data Challenges

The harm from knives is not always clearly illustrated in the data.

Interpersonal violence, intentional or unintended, harm to the self, or accidental harm often overlap or are not clearly defined. Often for penetrating injuries from sharp weapons and other implements, there can be gaps in the acquisition and inconsistency in the accuracy of the data with large categories for unknown objects.

In healthcare data it is important that we include self-presenters in our data as well as patients who have been brought in by the ambulance service or through other medical services. Also, there may be multiple ambulance services that serve a hospital and so publicising a data request from a single service provider will give a false impression. Similarly, the presentation of lower acuity injuries is important as our research has shown that victims of fatal injuries often have five or six previous presentations or encounters with healthcare services where safeguarding opportunities could have been employed. Some of these encounters of presentation with non-lethal penetrating injuries may not have been at the resuscitation room but in community clinics, general practitioners and even to school nurses.

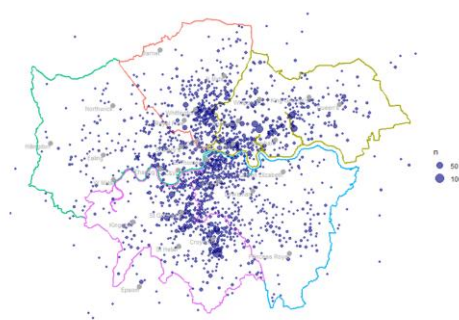
National trauma registries have also not historically captured the whole picture. The national trauma database for example previously only included injuries above the threshold of a certain score of injury and when a patient had been admitted for three days. In some studies, this excluded almost 50% of injuries and so was not effective to be used as a safeguarding measure.

The information sharing (ISTV) database is in evolution and will vastly improve the quality of data if it is resourced and able to be sustained across all healthcare providers. Some of this data will be crucial to effective resource allocation such as understanding the differences in location of incident, treatment and home location identified. This is important. It is greatly affected by the movement of people as well as the triage system of care in networks. Trauma pathways also affect the geographical location of death, so mortality rates clustered at major trauma centres need to be interpreted with this in mind.

Articles illustrating the current rates of injury in the media can be taken as a good source, but then the selection criteria can include different demographic age ranges, overlaps in accidental, self-harm and

accidental, overlaps in unknown or improvised weapons, and even include corporate manslaughter along with interpersonal violent deaths and other confounding factors.

London ED ISTV data: by geography



Any data which includes the COVID period can be difficult to interpret because the pandemic led to huge shifts in presentation with reductions in all trauma coming into hospitals. Other similar seasonal patterns exist and as do longer term trends linked to socio-economic factors. We therefore see peaks and troughs predictably throughout the year. They can be misinterpreted as confounding variables in assessing the efficacy of interventions if not considered.

London NHS: assault by 'sharp object'

Number of hospital admissions episodes in last 12 months



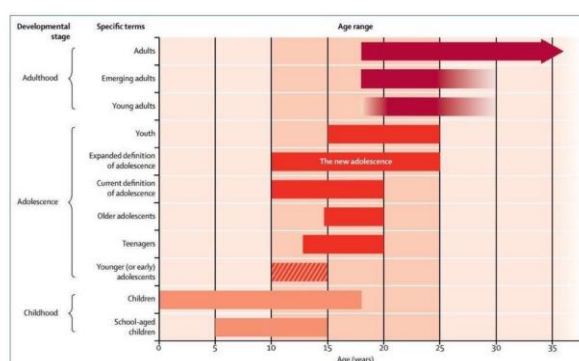
Data for rolling 12-month periods to the month shown. Metropolitan Police area only; excludes City of London. Includes NHS hospitals and NHS-commissioned activity in the independent sector. Data from FOI requests. Figures from Apr 2025 are provisional. Data to Jul 2025, published Oct 2025.

Chart: ghmm - Source: NHS Digital: Supplementary information: Hospital admissions for assault by sharp objects August 2025. National Archives/NHS Digital: Hospital admissions for assault by sharp objects or firearms March 2023. Monthly hospital admissions for assault by sharp object (August 2022). - Get the data - Embed - Download image - Created with Datawrapper

Youth and Vulnerability

The graph below is from the Lancet Child and Adolescent Health, entitled *The Age of Adolescence*. It contains a very interesting discussion around what do we mean by young people and the ages within which we commonly use different terms. It is very important to ensure that we are accurate and unified in our use of terms to avoid people falling between gaps in services and silos of support.

Are we speaking the same language?



There is an assumption that harm from knives predominantly affects young people under 25. However, in the major trauma centre in which I work, over two-thirds of the patients are over 25 and only a small proportion of those recorded on some research databases because of the exclusion criteria I alluded to earlier. In some months, more than 50% of penetrating injuries are due to self-harm rather than interpersonal violence. Often therefore the data quoted for interpersonal violence using some sources will just be the tip of an iceberg of harm and on this basis I think we need address injuries of all aetiology and demographics.

The WHO recognises violence relating to young people within a range of eleven to thirty years rather than up to 25. So, why do many of our strategies stop at 25? If we agree on the importance of early intervention, why are we pulling support from people just at the point they are starting to have young families? These are important considerations for what we do moving forwards in terms of providing and resourcing a continuum of support. It has implications for the future success of interventions. Our current prevention strategies are predominantly funded to support only a subset of those coming to harm under 25 years old.

Prevention Strategies

The public health approach to violence is a well-researched model which is a helpful paradigm to understand how we structure strategies of violence reduction, understand the clustering and spread of violence and address the environmental factors and structural violence in communities. It is sometimes misinterpreted as implying that that you “catch” violence off someone like a virus, but it is important that this is not misunderstood or stigmatise intervention and patients.

Public Health Approach to Violence

- 
1. Violence behaves like a *contagious disease* (*epidemic*)
 2. Treating violence like an epidemic gets *results* in communities

Violence is not Inevitable

Violence can be Prevented

A key concept often quoted is that violence is not inevitable and it can be prevented. But peace is not a passive inevitability in society. At what point can a society become so structurally violent that violence becomes inevitable for your personal survival? At what level would violence need to increase in your own workplace or in your own community so that you begin to think that unless you belong to a protective group or structure or were armed in some way, you became everyone's victim?

I think it is in that context that we think about the way in which people in our communities are quite often labelled as being violent, when in fact they can be in extremely difficult personal circumstances. From an external perspective, we may assume that they are making the wrong choices, but from their perspective and lived experience, they in fact have very few choices that they can make. The adoption of “trauma informed” understanding enables consideration of what has happened to someone rather than a perception of what is wrong with them.

Violent injuries within structurally violent environments can also be viewed as an industrial disease. We need therefore to consider why we are often putting people with that vulnerability back into a

hostile environment from which they have already come, thus exposing them to the risk of further harm. If we do that, why are we surprised when we see the same cycles of harm repeated?

What can we do about it?

Healthcare interventions can be through teachable moments in primary prevention, and through teachable moments of opportunity in secondary prevention. Every interaction can be an intervention. It is important that we ask ourselves if we really provide a continuum of unconditional support for people once they leave those interventions, and that teachable moments are also learning moments for organizations and services to listen and understand the harm that is occurring and stay relevant, credible and trusted to remain effective.

And how can we work together to realistically make that happen?

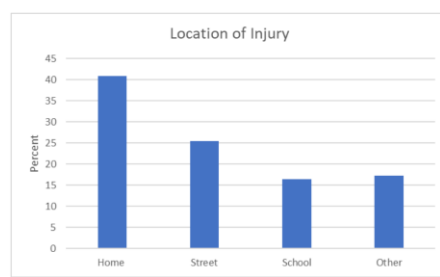
I had the privilege of working with the Cure of Violence project in Cape Town when I was there working as a trauma surgeon. Even in the most difficult circumstances on the Cape Flats, they demonstrated significant success with culturally credible interventions in extremely challenging environments.

Within the UK, the collaborations referred to in Glasgow that we have learned so much from have made a huge difference, as have Parliamentary Commissions, and numerous reports focusing on vulnerable people which led to the formation of the Violence Reduction Units and networks.

The SDC 2030 agenda for social improvements across the world and the Inspire approach from the WHO, already define cross disciplinary, multi-agency approaches to prevention. A multi-agency cross-cabinet approach is vital particularly in understanding the resourcing and shared benefits of investment for sustainable prevention that reaches beyond political cycles across multiple government departments. In London there is some fantastic work going on in the Violence Reduction Academy and Violence Reduction Unit, who have another conference taking place today.

It is also important that we learn from deaths that have occurred in other NHS research. For example, we are currently researching the care of those who have died from the most violent injuries and from our major incidents and looking in huge detail at how we can actually improve from things that we have learned for the survivability of injuries and how we respond to these things in the future.

Safe Places ?



Other inc: Sports injuries, park, soft play centres.

- Home is the most common location of injury (40.5%)



When we studied trauma to young people after the formation of the London major trauma system, we found that 60% of the injuries were blunt. Many happened in the home. There are huge issues with one in three victims living in poverty: one in four with significant safeguarding risk: and one in ten had no permanent home.

The home can still be a place of huge risk and that is extremely important when it comes to the context of safer knives.

Do young people have trusted adults in their lives? Do they have safe places? Can they make safe journeys?

We have identified patterns of injury such as the opening and closing time of schools, busy transport times, exclusions from school and associated with county lines criminal enterprise and the normalisation of sexual violence. We see increased vulnerabilities with looked after children and I know several of the charitable partners here today are dedicated to addressing this. It is well described in the Commission on Young Lives report *Hidden in Plain Sight*. There are predictable and avoidable opportunities where we can reduce the risk of people being harmed.

I looked at firearms injuries across the whole of South London and found similar correlations with firearms to significant social challenges that people are facing in the communities. Exactly the same factors are seen in London in harm from knives with social inequality, poverty, poor mental health, and racism. As well as financial disparity, there is disparity of opportunity and hope.

Prevention Strategies in Knife design

Knives that are the most dangerous are those that are the most likely to cause lethal harm. These weapons can penetrate the body and sever major arteries or highly vascularised organs in locations from which it is difficult to obtain haemorrhage control. The neck, junctional areas where the limbs meet the torso and within the torso itself are areas from which a significant number of injuries prove fatal, even within modern well-equipped trauma systems with advanced pre-hospital teams. Research and clinical experience have demonstrated that sharp tipped knives are more likely to be able to penetrate, with the result of more catastrophic injury.

I am a supporter of promoting the use of round-end knives and particularly in those locations where we have guardianship over others and known vulnerabilities, replacing sharp tipped knives with domestic implements that are less lethal and much safer.

It is also particularly important to address age appropriate and task appropriate access to knives, and safeguard those who may come to harm from access to lethal knives at a point of mental health crisis or criminal intent.

The issue does not just relate to zombie knives. The updated legislation reflects this and the vast array of potentially lethal knives, as well as the responsibilities of retailers.

Improvements in healthcare have come about because of changes in our ability to be able to technically look after somebody but also a change in mindset and human factors. Changes in the culture of how we purchase, store and safeguard the use of knives in society is also possible, and will undoubtedly be of significance to achieve a reduction in harm, particularly to those who are most vulnerable in society, and in need of safeguarding.

Bystander and first responder aid

The role of the police is incredibly important in administering first aid at the scene of incidents where they are first on the scene or where it is too dangerous for the public or healthcare responders, and as a result save lives. I think this is very under-reported and often unrecognized. This is so important as in the most lethal exsanguinating injuries the speed of response is crucial to survival. Being able to put a simple but effective dressing on or tourniquet to stop an arterial bleed can increase the chance of survival by about eight times.

There are many fantastic charities such as the Daniel Baird Foundation, Your Stance, the Ben Kinsella Foundation and Growing Against Violence, all providing preventative education in schools and communities with several now educating on the ability to stop bleeding. Some have been providing haemorrhage control boxes alongside AEDs that have the right medical equipment in them. Future support for investment in this would transform disparities in access to rapid control.

Haemorrhage control kits are just as applicable to use in rural environments as they are in cities and can save a life from accidents on farms, industries and domestic accident in remote geographical locations or with challenging access to pre-hospital care teams. They should be seen as part and parcel of being able to have effective bystander care across our communities as with AEDs and other resuscitation. Their installation should not be associated with stigma within a community.

Another extrapolation from this is that improved civic preparedness makes just as much difference in everyday occurrences as it does in a major incident. We know that the ability of bystanders to obtain effective haemorrhage control at the scene like that is life saving for those patients who are within the hot zone of an incident.

Reductions in harm need to be carefully considered as do what the denominator of that harm includes. Focusing on knife crime alone as a metric, risks underrepresenting a wider incidence of self and accidental harm that benefits from similar interventions, and there is a need to broaden current prevention strategies which predominantly support those under 25 years old.

I believe that reducing the availability of the most lethal knives with sharp points will have a significant impact to reduce the harm to those who are vulnerable to accidental, intentional and self-harm. This measure needs to be seen in context as part of a multi-sector public health approach to support safer communities through a reduction of structural violence and disparities of the social determinants of health.



7. Knife Crime and its Prevention

Graham Farrell, Professor of Crime Science, University of Leeds

GRAHAM FARRELL

Introduction

Thank you to colleagues in the Safer Knives Group for coordinating today's conference. Thank you to the Economic and Social Research Council for the funding, and the Royal College for hosting us.

My background is over thirty years of crime prevention research. I think this complements the other perspectives represented here. I have enjoyed the presentations so far, and a lot of what I will say will resonate with them.

I will start by saying that I am looking forward to today's lunch. But, won't it be intimidating to be in a room where there will be over a hundred people with knives? No. It won't be, because all our table knives already have rounded tips. Those rounded tips are such a normal part of everyday life that we barely notice it is a major crime prevention and safety intervention. It means that our most prevalent and frequently used knives are already safe. Hence my argument is that it is just a small incremental step for rounded kitchen knives to become the norm. My argument is also that we should expect safer kitchen knives in the same way we already expect safer table knives for dining at home, in restaurants, or elsewhere. We should not view rounded kitchen knives as a major social change but as a small step along the sensible road we have been walking for many years.

The Extent and Cost of Knife Crime

I am first going to discuss the extent of the knife crime problem and its costs, then crime prevention policy. The data is from the 2025 House of Commons Library Research Briefing *Knife Crime Statistics: England and Wales* (Allen & Wong 2025) and data linked in that report, which refers to knife crime in the year to March 2024. In that year, the police recorded 50,511 knife crimes (51,221 including Greater Manchester Police). However, we know that, except for homicide, a significant part of crime is not reported to, or recorded by, the police. I am going to skip through my methodology here but note that these are my unpublished estimates that should be treated as preliminary. Since we know the rates of reporting and recording for different types of crime, it is possible to estimate the total volume of knife crime. I estimate that 114,386 knife crimes occurred in the year to March 2024 in England and Wales, which is more than twice the number recorded by police. They are distributed by crime type as shown in the left-side column in Figure 1. Over 40% were assaults with an injury, close to 30% threats to kill, and about a quarter were robberies. There were 252 knife-related homicides, shown at the base of the left column: this figure is not adjusted and assumes all homicides are reported and recorded.

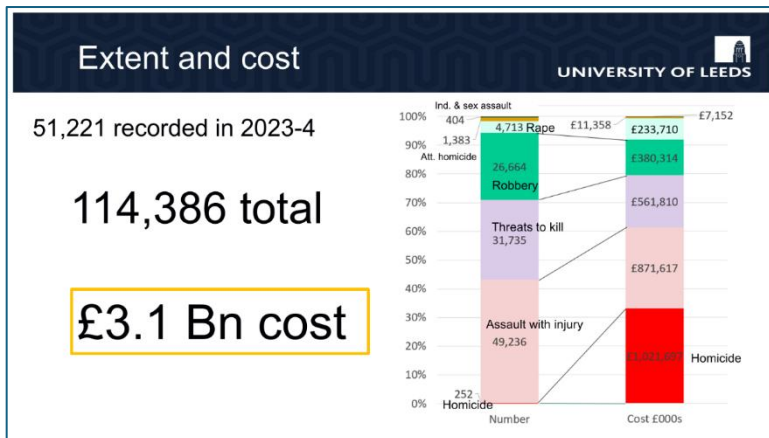


Figure 1: The Extent and Cost of Knife Crime in England & Wales

The Home Office first estimated the social and economic costs of crime 25 years ago. The cost per crime type estimates used here are the more recent estimates from Heeke et al (2018), inflated to 2024 prices. Applying those estimates to the number of estimated knife crimes produces the costs per type of knife crime shown in the right-hand column of Figure 1. The sum of these is, I think, the first estimate of the cost of knife crime in England and Wales in the year to March 2024 of £3.1 billion.

On Radio 4's 'More or Less' programme they usually ask: Is that a big number? Whether £3.1 billion is big number probably depends on your viewpoint. It is more than we each earn, but it is a small number in the context of the economy. One thing this analysis reveals is that the costs are unevenly distributed by type of knife crime. The 252 homicides are around 0.2% of the number of knife crimes but, at over £1 billion, around a third of the total cost. For the reasons I will go on to explain, I am confident that round-tip kitchen knives will reduce the homicide rate by around half, making it a particularly efficient form of crime prevention.

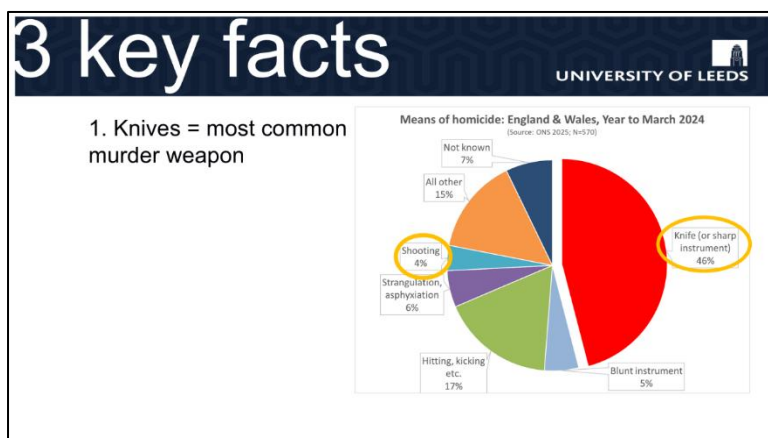


Figure 2: Knives are the most common murder weapon in England & Wales

Three Key Facts about Knife Crime

This section details three key facts about knife crime.

First, knives are the most common murder weapon in England and Wales, shown in Figure 2 based on data from the Office for National Statistics. Knives were used in 46% of the 570 homicides. Note also that only 4% were shootings, and gun-related homicide is an issue to which I will return.

Second, the pointed kitchen knife is the most common type of knife used in homicide. The Office for National Statistics made available information on type of knife used in homicides from 2022/23, and

Toby Davies and I used that data previously (Farrell & Davies 2024). The more recent version of the data is shown in Figure 3.¹ While much of the media focus in recent years has been on zombie knives (presumably zombies make good clickbait), they accounted for 3.4% of the knife related homicides. Pointed kitchen knives were used in over half of the knife-related homicides (52.3%) in the year to March 2024. This is the real problem.

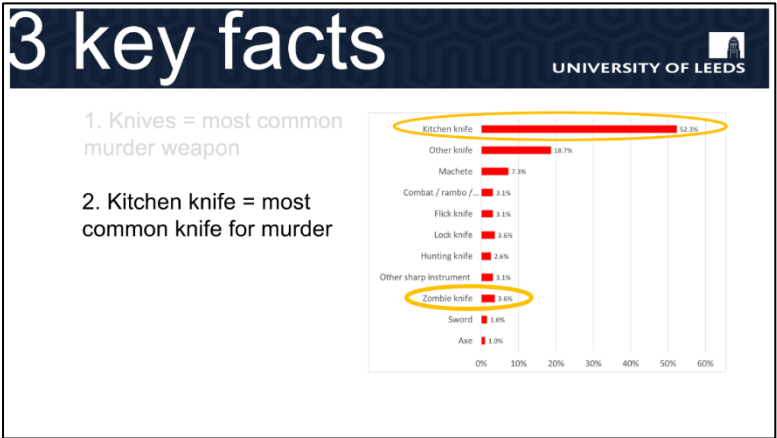


Figure 3: Kitchen knives are the most common form of knife used in homicide

Third, pointed knives are very dangerous because they penetrate vital arteries and organs, but round-tip knives do not. This fact is based on Leisa Nichol-Drew’s research (Nichols-Drew et al. 2020) which tested different knives against different materials to check the amount of damage they do. It is an amazingly elegant piece of research that shows the vital stuff we need to know, which is that pointed knives are the problem and we already know the solution. On the right in Figure 4 are the knives that we – me and my family - have in our kitchen at home. Nowadays, when I see a pointed knife now in a kitchen, I have a visceral reaction. It seems I have subconsciously grown used to safe knives and now find even the proximity of lethal weapons to be rather scary. You would be surprised how quickly we not only accept change for the better but change our way of thinking. It reminds me of the aphorism “It is easier to act yourself into a new way of thinking than to think yourself into a new way of acting.”



Figure 4: Pointed knives are very dangerous but round-tip knives are not

¹ Knife types categorised as ‘unknown’ were excluded.

The View from the Optimist

In this section I will explain why I am a crime prevention optimist. Having worked on crime prevention for many years, I know that we have successfully reduced many types of crime and know that we can apply the same preventive approach to knife crime.

Much of this optimism reflects the fact that, in the last thirty years, and following decades of increasing violence and other types of crime in the post-World War Two period, violence has declined steadily. The left side of Figure 5 shows the trend in violence since 1898. It uses data from the Crime Survey for England & Wales for 1981 onwards, and police records (adjusted upwards for under reporting and recording) for the years before that. Violence has declined for thirty years since the mid-1990s, and by over 80%. This has been because of security improvements related to many consumer products and the built environment. This includes motor vehicle security and household security, and what the scholar Ronald V. Clarke termed an “avalanche of security” across society - in businesses, entertainment districts, schools, sports stadiums, public transportation – all walks of public and private life. These security improvements reduced property crime which in turn reduced violent crime. Some violent crimes including robberies of banks, post offices and other businesses, were prevented by security improvements. Other types of violence because, as property crime became more difficult, fewer young people became involved in crime. Property crime is numerically larger than violence and provides a foot on the ladder to violence (Tilley & Farrell 2022).

I have been researching these major long-term crime declines for nearly two decades. The decline in crime is not just in England and Wales - it is across all high income countries. The policy lesson from the research is this. We can prevent crime by reducing crime opportunities.

The other main policy lessons are from gun control. In the USA, where gun control is limited, there were almost 18,000 gun-related homicides in 2023. In England & Wales where gun control is more comprehensive, there were twenty-two (22) in the year to March 2024 – this is the 4% of homicides that I mentioned earlier when discussing Figure 1. That is a 618-fold difference between the USA and England & Wales. Now, the USA is larger, but it is not 618 times larger! As a per capita rate, the US rate of gun-related homicide is 111 (one hundred and eleven) times higher. In effect, when compared to the US rate, gun control measures in England and Wales have prevented 99% of gun-related homicides. Controlling pointed kitchen knives will have a similar effect upon homicide and other crimes involving those knives.

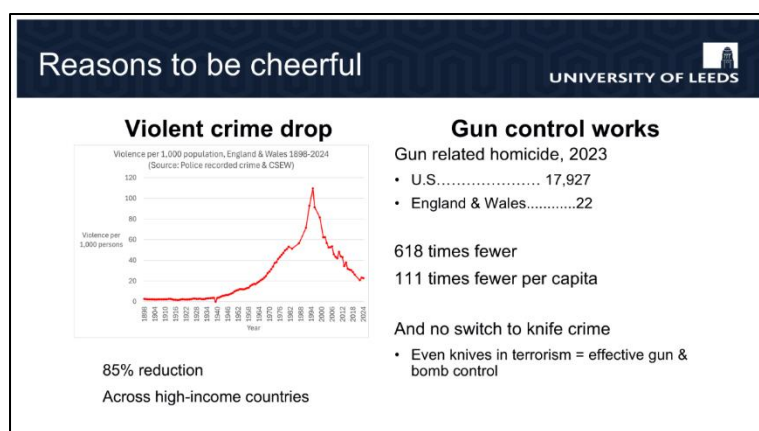


Figure 5: Reducing crime opportunities is an effective approach

A further important point to make here is that our “saved” gun deaths did not just displace knife deaths. People do not switch to the next best option - because the next best option is nowhere near as good. Similarly, people will not switch from pointed knives to screwdrivers or scissors because they are less readily available (particularly for heat-of-the-moment violence but also for teens who might

otherwise steal a knife from the kitchen), less attractive (as status symbols) and less efficient, that is, less lethal on average. There are more arguments and evidence relating to “displacement” that are discussed elsewhere (Farrell & Davies 2024).

Knife Control

We already have many knife control policies and practices, as rounded table knives illustrate. In policy terms we are probably one of the world leaders in knife control, as shown by recent legislative developments in Figure 6. In that context, improving the design of knives is a minor incremental step that continues long-term progress because we still have our major homicide weapon out there, which is the point of a kitchen knife.



Figure 6: Recent knife control legislation

Earlier, Commander Clayton, the national police lead on knife crime, spoke elegantly of very recent and ongoing legislative developments to reduce knife crime that the police have promoted. Rounded kitchen knives are, in my view, a conceptually small step in the same direction as this work but will have a large long-term impact. I would like the police to more formally support this proposal as a natural extension of knife bins and other work to remove dangerous knives.

Rounded kitchen knives, as other presenters have said, will reduce heat-of-the-moment killings. This type of killing is particularly important in relation to violence against women and girls. This is a crime that occurs in the household in particular.

Rounded knives will make it more difficult for teens to find a weapon at home. Currently there are so many pointed knives in kitchens that many people will not notice if one goes missing. Other weapons are less effective for committing the crimes for which pointed kitchen knives are currently used, and such crimes will decline. All the evidence suggests that only a small proportion will find an alternative: what we know from a whole host of crime prevention evaluations of different crime types is that when crime opportunities are reduced, not only does the crime not displace, but there is often a positive domino effect, a halo effect, termed a diffusion of preventive benefits. If pointed kitchen knives are removed from circulation, it is likely that many teens who would otherwise easily obtain a lethal weapon, will not get involved in crime.

The removal of pointed kitchen knives will also prevent thousands of non-criminal knife-related injuries at work and in the home. This broader beneficial effect will go beyond knife crime (Figure 7). There were 43,000 workplace reportable knife-related injuries in 2019 according to the British Safe Industry Federation (2021), which does not include the home. Kings College trauma surgeon Duncan Bew spoke earlier about knife injuries he deals with. They are not all stabbings. Many, perhaps most, knife-related serious injuries that are sometimes categorised as ‘accidents’ are also avoidable.

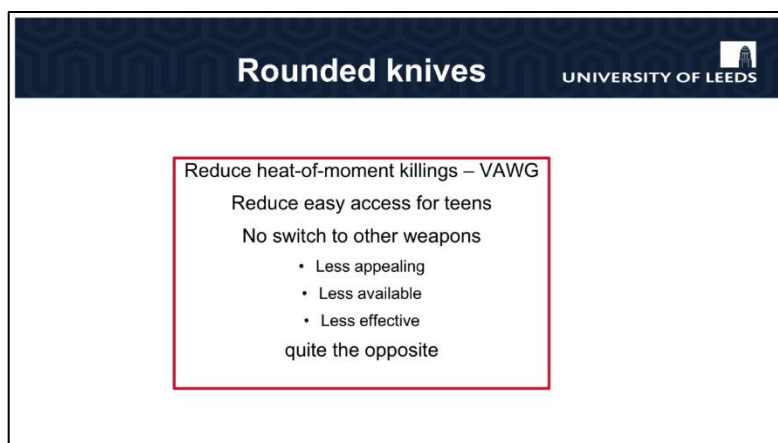


Figure 7: Knife crime will be prevented with little or no displacement but with a broader diffusion of benefits.

Dangerous Products and the Role of Manufacturers

There are many examples of dangerous products where the dangerous aspect has been designed-out, often requiring legislation or industry standards, shown in Figure 8. When viewed in the context of these examples, it is apparent that a proposal for safer knife design is not at all unusual.

There have been many dangerous products where the design of the product itself causes the problem. Perhaps we are heading to the day when someone brings a lawsuit against the manufacturers of pointed kitchen knives for producing a product that is known to be dangerous. The General Product Safety Regulations (2005 SI No. 1803) state that all products need to be safe under “normal or foreseeable use”. But what does foreseeable mean? Are 100,000 knife crimes foreseeable? We know that over half of knife-related homicides involved the use of pointed kitchen knives last year and the year before. We can foresee what will happen next year with reasonably accuracy if nothing changes.



Figure 8: Why knife manufacturers should develop and promote rounded kitchen knives

Others have spoken elegantly already of what manufacturers might do. There is a range of reasons why manufacturers should be developing and promoting rounded kitchen knife designs. Note first that some already are, and some of them are here at today’s conference (look back at Figure 4).

A summary of some of the reasons for knife manufacturers to design and promote safer rounded kitchen knives is given as Figure 8. Not least among the reasons is the enhanced public safety role in contributing to national crime targets. Interviews with chefs show that there is no loss of functionality: chefs say that the long point of kitchen knife is a historical artifact and that they could use a five centimetre knife if they need anything with a point. Corporate social responsibility is a significant

consideration: it means not designing products that are known to be unsafe. Perhaps the reason that will attract manufacturers is an economic one - there is a potentially large new market in which profit can be made. If this country becomes the world leader in rounded kitchen knives, the manufacturers who led the way will have a comparative advantage in international markets as they develop. Corresponding arguments can be made for retailers who need to be involved in the process.

Previously we have phased out undesirable household items like the incandescent light bulbs, and we can do this in relation to pointed knives. Manufacturers should begin introducing more round-tip knives in their product lines. They should collaborate to promote safer knives and educate consumers on the benefits.

Conclusion

Can we fix it? Yes, we can.

I am confident, based on the thirty years of evidence I have been working on including the 80% reductions in many types of violence, and the evidence from gun control, that if pointed kitchen knives are phased-out and rounded knives phased-in, then this will halve knife-related homicides. In addition, it will reduce other knife related crimes, knife carrying, and potentially other criminality. The broader benefit will be a reduction in the many thousands of knife-related injuries at work and at home.

Rounded kitchen knives will reduce knife-related homicide, knife-related crime and knife-related injuries. The evidence indicates it is a safe policy to pursue, and while it is only one incremental step along the road we are already walking, it is an important step to take. And the longer we delay, the more knife crime occurs.

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8. The Role of Safer Knives in Preventing Knife Crime

Patrick Green, CEO of the Ben Kinsella Trust

PATRICK GREEN I have been working in this space for a long time and when I look at the landscape of knife crime today, I am struck by a haunting sense of déjà vu. The conversations we are having now, the warning signs we are identifying, the systemic gaps we are critiquing - these are not new. Many of the issues that were present twenty, maybe thirty years ago, are still present now.

As many of the speakers have already stated knife crime is a deeply complex issue. But for the generation of young people growing up today, it has become something far more disturbing: it has become part of everyday life.

It is a reality that is constantly amplified by the smart phones in their pockets. Social media has heightened exposure to violence in a way we never had to contend with decades ago. It leaves our young people in a paradoxical state: they are often desensitised to the imagery of violence because they see it so often, yet, simultaneously, they are ultimately fearful for their safety where they live and where they socialise.

This fear is real. It dictates where they go, the route they take, and how they carry themselves. Yet, when we speak to these young people, they tell us that this fear is largely ignored by those who should be protecting them. They feel unheard.

We have known the answers to reducing knife crime for some time. We know that addressing social injustices, providing real opportunities, and investing in young people are key to tackling the root causes of knife crime. We have known this for years. Yet thus far progress is far too slow.

Now, I want to give credit where it is due. I must acknowledge the Government's recent commitment to reduce knife crime by 50% over the next ten years. This is a bold target, and it has been backed up by bringing forward much-needed legislative changes. I also welcome the introduction of the 'Young Futures' programme, which is launching initially as a pilot.

The Government's manifesto described the Young Futures Programme as a "SureStart for teenagers" - a holistic, preventative network that catches young people before they fall. That is the vision we need. Moving this programme from a pilot to full implication is in my opinion critical to achieving the success that we all seek in reducing knife crime.

There is a need for wider systematic change. Too many tragic incidents were avoidable. They happened because services failed to respond as they should. I see failures in better identification of at-risk youth. I see failures in following up on warning signs. I see failures in referring onwards to the right agencies.

Every time a file is closed too early, or a warning is missed in the system, a precious opportunity to potentially save a life is lost.

Before I finish, I want to take a moment to recognise the incredible role that bereaved families and those with lived experience have played. You have kept the issue of knife crime in the public eye and pushed for real change - not just in laws, but in the everyday practices that keep our children safe. It is your voices that make people listen. It is your courage that drives action. And because of you, change happens.

*addressing social injustices ...
and investing in young people
are key to tackling the root
causes of knife crime*

NIC MADGE Just to sum up the key note presentations. For me, there are three important points. The most important cost of knife harm is the lives which are lost or ruined. It is impossible to put a figure on the cost of that. Secondly, one of the key points from Graham's talk, is that when we put a figure on the financial cost of knife harm, we are talking about over £3 billion a year. That

is a huge sum. Thirdly, and this is echoing what all the speakers have said, change is possible. We should all be working towards it. I am sure we all are. Thank you to all of our speakers. This has been an extremely productive session.



9. Can Manufacturers and Retailers Promote the Sale of Safer Knives?

A dialogue between Kate O'Neill, Chief Commercial Officer, The Rayware Group; and Will Jones, BHETA; chaired by Professor John Crichton

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON Now we have a discussion with manufacturers, with Kate O'Neill, Chief Commercial Officer of the Rayware Group and Will Jones from BHETA, the British Home Enhancement Trade Association. To begin, would you like to introduce yourselves?

KATE O'NEILL I am Chief Commercial Officer, which sounds very formal, but actually I develop products. I work for a wonderful business called Rayware and we develop products that you will have in your home. We have designed rounded knives and we have worked with lots of members in here. So lovely to see you and I will speak to you properly later. But fundamentally, I work as part of an industry that tries to design for solutions: the solution being what do you need in your kitchen and how does it work? Our industry is really passionate as we love developing products for consumers and we are always trying to get to what a consumer needs and wants.

Around five years ago, we saw the statistics in and around knives, and we wanted to try and solve that, which is how we got to the Viners rounded knives.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON Kate, it is worth just mentioning that there are a number of different rounded knives now commercially available, but I am sure you could mention the one that you produce.

KATE O'NEILL Yes. Ours are the Viners Assure knives.

So yes, I work in an industry that does reflect what is going on and what consumers want. We cannot just develop products that do not work commercially.

Lots of people in our industry are working with Will at BHETA, our industry body. They bring a lot of manufacturers like ourselves to the table to talk about industry issues and broader consumer issues, which is how we got to what we are going to do on legislation that is coming in as an industry, and make sure that we design proportionately for that.

Thankfully lots of people in our industry, have started to take up the mantle of rounded knives, but we do rely heavily on our retailers to listen to what we want to present and give us an opportunity to sell it. So, we are only one part of it.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON So that brings us beautifully to Will. Would you like to introduce yourself?

WILL JONES So, I am Will Jones. I run BHETA. We are the trade association that represents the the majority of manufacturers and suppliers of knives and balded items to the UK market.

Firstly, because you might expect that I am going to defend the need for pointed knives, I want to say that we actually take this issue incredibly seriously. It really was quite sobering listening to some of the speakers earlier on this morning and it is clear what impact knife crime has on families and society. I just wanted to make that point.

Since 2018, we as an association have been working hard to contribute to this issue. We set up a steering group, which is made up of manufacturers and major retailers in the UK. As a result, we have been able to put things through, like the Challenge 25 initiative, make changes to packaging, and, as demonstrated today, we work with key stakeholders, for example, the Safer Knife Group, and Commander Clayman of the Metropolitan Police. We work with the Home Office, and I am looking forward to hearing from the Minister later, because if we are going to make any change, collaboration is absolutely crucial. We are not here to be shouted down as the supplier of pointed knives as they still have a role to play. We are here to say: how can we work together to find a longer-term solution to this? There are some big challenges, and we will get into that in a moment. But that is the background to why I am here and what I'm hoping to achieve.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON So Will, the first question: do you think there is a need for safer knife designs?

WILL JONES I think there is an opportunity for safer knife design and this is where it gets a bit commercial and business focussed. If you take the emotion out of the conversation, suppliers, manufacturers, brands will follow if they can see an opportunity. They have got all the ability to innovate and design. They will come up with whatever they need to do, as long as the market opportunity is there. That does sound a bit callous, but that is the reality of what we should be looking at. To create the market opportunity requires legislative changes, which is where the Home Office, the Minister and Government need to get on board with what we are advocating. We have had some very good and productive sessions with the Home Office and have put forward recommendations. The most obvious recommendation are legislative changes that would exempt what we call safer knives. It is probably one of the first things any steering group going forward should try and agree on. We do not like the term blunt ended or round ended because at the end of the day, why would anybody want to buy a blunt knife? We tend to use the term "safer knives".

What we need to do is to demonstrate to the market, in other words, the retailers, that they can actually merchandise and sell safer knives without fear of prosecution in a very safe way and would be exempt from prosecution, because actually safer knives, and I include cutlery knives because believe it or not currently the law states that they have to be sold in exactly the same way as nine inch kitchen knives, which is ridiculous. So, no wonder the retailers do not really know where to turn.

If you look at the negativity around this issue, retailers are an easy target, etc. So there really does need to be a clear mandate that says you can legally sell safer knives in an open and transparent way. There needs to be some clear safe packaging, a British design standard that confirms the safety of the knife and its functionality. We need Government to take that on board and to help persuade Government that that is the direction to go. You need to have key stakeholders involved. So, you would need the Met police, you would need all the industry, the charities that are represented here today, people like yourselves. You would need the retailers and the suppliers.

The reason why there are no retailers at this meeting today is they do not want to put their heads above the parapet and who blames them, because when you look at the negativity that is around this issue, there is no clear direction for a retailer to take.

KATE O'NEILL If you can appreciate that at the very top of the retailer chain, you have their solicitors. Their legal teams are basically telling them not to speak about it publicly, not to engage in it. Yet, I can walk in, I will get an audience to talk about a safer knife. They will nod in agreement and a lot of them will move forward because they believe in it. They just cannot be shown because there is no clear direction. They are afraid of putting knives in a retail environment. That is the crux of the problem: that we are grouping knives all in exactly the same way. If we are serious about rounded knives, and I have heard everybody speak about it, we are a hundred percent behind it. Why can't we differentiate between the two? What is stopping us from differentiating between the two? Because we have talked about a very detailed system where volume sales of knives will now be captured, but rounded knives will also still be captured in that legislative piece coming in on Ronan's Law. We know all the good reasons why that is happening. If we are serious about that, then we designate that a rounded knife has certain characteristics Leisa Nichols-Drew has already shown. What is that determinant of a rounded knife and what should it look like? Then let's make sure that there is a British Standard. Let's make sure that there is tamper proof packaging. That is not age related.

there is an opportunity for safer knife design ... manufacturers, will follow if they can see an opportunity

Somebody at the beginning talked about going into a retail environment and using a knife against employees or somebody in the street. That is a solvable problem. We are in the industry of solvable problems. That is design.

That is packaging. That is a legislative framework, but it is also very clear what a determinant of a safer knife is. This is the packaging that you should use. Trust me, retailers will go with that because they understand legislative frameworks. What they do not understand is a lot of media and a lot of people telling them they cannot do something, and they will not go near it.

So get the framework right. Call that out really clearly. Trust me, the retailers will come and where the retailers go, the manufacturers will go as well. We work in a small industry. Retailers are very large, and we are only one small drop in the ocean.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON So I hear a message from you about a clear way of distinguishing a safer rounded kitchen knife design from a pointed one.

WILL JONES Correct. And the creation of opportunity where we can be joined by retailers who are given clear legal parameters, which will enable them to make the most of that opportunity without fear of prosecution.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON I want to just come back to Kate because the Rayware Group has done a lot of work in this area. Can you say a little bit more about testing standards, engineering assurances?

KATE O'NEILL So our products are already tested. There is a British Standard for knives in the UK, and most responsible manufacturers or designers will meet that test. We already have a British Standard, but it is really more about the flexibility of a knife and if the handle of the knife remains on during a set standard. There is an opportunity to extend that British Standard further.

We tested knives when we were trying to solve the problem, a very large problem, but something that we thought we could do. We started to design a new knife. We spoke to consumers. We sent a survey to consumers. They chose the design of the knife that we essentially sell. When I have shown our

Assure knives, now the rounded knife, for us it looks completely normal. Every single day we use it. It is completely in our psyche and, thankfully, of a lot of our consumers.

The first time I sent it to somebody, and I think Stephen from BHETA told me when his family saw it for the first time, they thought it was odd. But then when his family started using it, we realised that it did all the things that it needed to do.

*the rounded knife did
all the things that it
needed to do*

And when we designed it, we designed it to open packaging as well because when we surveyed consumers, they told us that they used knives to chop, to prepare food, but they also used them a lot in the kitchen to open packs.

Any kitchen manufacturer can design knives to open packs as well, using that rounded curve. So, I think the

product is fit for purpose. Maybe the legislation isn't quite fit for purpose. Certainly, if we fix that, then I think the retailers and consumers will buy them.

If we go into schools for Home Economics, some kids see homeware products for the first time. They will see a Mason Cash mixing bowl (one of our other brands we are proud to have) and typically a Pyrex glass bowl. And if we can put a Viner's Assure knife or another manufacturer's rounded knife in there, a consumer, and a young consumer at that, a nine or eleven to sixteen year-old will think that that knife shape is something that is normal. And I think to get to that point (that Graham the covered) it takes around twenty years to get into the psyche. We can reach that a lot quicker if schools and other organisations move to rounded knives.

WILL JONES I think that that links quite nicely to the size of the challenge ahead of us because you have got to change consumer behaviour.

If you look at the number of TV cookery programmes, celebrity chefs, the industry is well supported by the media, there is a lot of consumer interest. You have a lot of serious hobbyists out there who in their mind need pointed knives to prepare food. So, if the market opportunity is to be clearly laid out, which is the legislative point that we talked about earlier, you then need the big brands and manufacturers to clearly see what support there is going to be there. And that is where you get into the education programme. So, the link to what Kate was talking about at schools, youth clubs, colleges, they need to start seeing these types of safer knives being used. You then need to have the brands using their chefs to get celebrity endorsement of a range of knives. Imagine a Jamie Oliver TV programme demonstrating food preparation using safer knives. That is what it will take to slowly change the consumer mindset, to move the market from a tiny percentage of sales currently for safer rounded knives to ultimately where the opportunity may lie. Until we can demonstrate to the industry that clear pathway, you are not going to get buy-in. This is why currently everybody is in defensive mode and feeling threatened. It needs to be opened up for a wider, collaborative debate and the way forward will become clearer.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON So Will, Kate was talking about a British Standard. Are the right bits of government who are involved in that around the table as well? And do you want to expand on other things that might help or hinder retailing safer knives?

WILL JONES Well, we are now talking about retailing. I am not the expert on that. If you look at the last meeting we had at the Home Office, which was constructive, you had a representative there from the British Retail Consortium as well as major retailers. This is a very good example of how you want

to take it forward. I would suggest that, driven by the Home Office and Government, they have got to set up a working group: and on that working group you have key people who really do represent interested parties. We would be very happy to be there as representatives of manufacturers and brands. I am sure the BRC would be happy to be there to represent those retailers. Certainly, in those initial meetings you need to have them and individual retailers involved.

If you look at the percentage of knives sold in retail, you need to understand where they are being sold. Online is being well represented at these Home Office meetings. You look at the grocers. Where is the big proportion? Then you get into more specialists. So, it is easy to break it down and see where you feel you need contributions from. Then I guess the charitable organisations need to work out who is their best voice in terms of what we are trying to achieve here. I think the Safer Knife Group, with the level of expertise that you have on board, particularly listening to the figures and the stats coming from these two gentlemen here, sounds well placed. So, you can already start to see the foundation of a good team that could take this forward who would then give all stakeholders the confidence to move forward.

The only key person missing is the Minister today. We made some very good progress with the last Minister. Unfortunately, the way that we run our country tends to be, you just change ministers ad hoc. It is difficult to understand reasons behind that. I am not a politician, so I am not going to get into that. You can see the frustration that ministerial changes make because I was feeling very confident in where we were with the last minister and here we are and I have not even met the new Minister. I do not know what her views are. I am not even sure her own team are clear on what her view is on this. So, she should be here, she should be involved.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON But I think one thing it is fair to say, Will, is that retailers have come a long way where from 2019 where it was quite a challenge to talk to them about.

WILL JONES I think they are at the table. They just want some direction and legislative changes and not to be caught short. So, what we certainly are saying to retailers is, we have a voice. They are willing to listen. There has been a big shift forward.

KATE O'NEILL We have more and more retailers willing to take our knives and other rounded knives. So, I think that is a significant step forward. That is not to say that we should rest and say the job is done. I think there is more of a willingness than there has ever been. And I think by keeping the pressure on and showing the opportunity ... So, if we sell 3% of rounded knives in the UK currently, we want that to go to 50% in three years, to 75% to 100%. Demonstrate the progress and retailers will understand. That is what we have been trying to say.

We started by saying it in a commercial way, we are all commercial bodies. We are driven and have to make money to pay our employees and ourselves. We have been trying to drive this as a commercial opportunity because retailers understand that. So do the manufacturers, but there has to be support so that we all feel comfortable that we know where it is going and why.

There are a couple of other things that, if you don't mind me picking out as well, in some of the conversations today about online, there is a real risk about over legislating online. Responsible retailing on online should be at the forefront of everybody's agenda. But when Leanne stood up bravely and told her story on the news on that day when she launched her campaign, we tracked Google search terms in and around, rounded knives. The important point was that we could see consumers going to all our key retailers. What was interesting was that a number of different things happened. They heard Leanne's story, and they went online. The first place they went online was to buy a knife. And immediately they bought a knife online. They were doing exactly what Leanne was asking them to do.

So, we just need to be careful that when, if, and how we are going to legislate, we just make sure that we do not push somebody underground for knives, because that is honestly my fear for that.

We could also see when they went into certain retailers. There are two retailers that we supply to. They are the biggest home buyers' businesses in the UK. One of them does not sell a knife in a retail environment. It has a card outline which you take to the till and it is swapped out. Then we have another retailer, which is pitched in more or less the customer market. They sell knives in store. You do not have to go to a till to pick up the products. There were differences in sales between the retailer with the cards and the retailer who was selling them where you could just pick them up, because essentially when you have a knife at point of sale, you will sell more, rather than the card copy. We are visual people. You pick it up, you see it, you look at, you understand, you take it to the till. So, if we can get that framework right as well and understand it, you will drive more rounded knife sales.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON So, it sounds as though there is a legislative opportunity coming up. But your call is for some differentiation?

KATE O'NEILL Absolutely. Otherwise, that may be unintended consequences.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON Are there any other pitfalls? We have heard lots of ideas. We are in respectful space here, but are there any that you are saying are off beam or may have other unintended negative consequences?

KATE O'NEILL I think those two things you solve. The rest of it will go with it.

At the very beginning there was talk about tax. No manufacturer likes tax. I couldn't tell you how many taxes as a business there are. We have had paper tax, plastic tax. It is hard. We have got 4% coming through, and we cannot pass it on to the consumer. And our retailers don't allow us to pass it onto them. So that means it comes to the manufacturer. So, it gets squeezed and squeezed and squeezed. I am not here for the sad story. I am just telling you to explain about that.

I think if we maybe get some legislative certainly, the directional framework fixed, and the distinction between rounded and tipped knives, very nearly half of the problem falls away.

WILL JONES The tax thing we should knock on the head. If you introduce a tax on a pointed versus round knife, and you are trying to say they have got the same functionality in performance, you will just confuse the consumer and the retailer will go, "What am I doing here? I am not quite clear. Why am I offering that differentiation in choice to my customers, etc?" If pointed knives are taxed higher, customers will just go and try and find them somewhere else, which isn't going to help, probably the grey market, online. It is not going to be good for us trying to control it. And I can see the Met Police nodding in agreement there. So, we shouldn't be doing anything that encourages more knives to be going that way. We want to be more open and make it easier to have knives on display. Everybody should be clear what the rules are. We then have that opportunity to introduce more of those safer knives and the market will change over time.

I think if there is one watch word for our discussions today, it is collaboration between the different parties here. 100%, with the police, the NHS trauma services, the third sector, all sorts of people in the room.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON What particular collaboration with you would help to move things in the right direction?

WILL JONES So for us as the Association, the starting point has to be with Government, the Home Office, and working with retailers. We already have a retail steering group that we helped set up. I

think we could start with getting some consensus in terms of what the market might look like through legislative change. That is the starting point because what leads from that is: what can we do about design? What can we do about standards? What can we do about packaging?

If you were coming at this from a British manufacturer's company perspective, this is an opportunity but only if the market is clearly defined. We have a plethora of brilliant designers who would jump at the opportunity if there was some national award. Who wouldn't want to be the person winning the award for safer knives that got that endorsement? So that is back to that commercial opportunity in the market.

KATE O'NEILL Yes, I think there is lots of commercial opportunity for manufacturers like ourselves to ask consumers to remove pointed knives at home and then replace them with new knives. That is our biggest opportunity.

I think when you talked about collaboration, it is being involved. We cannot hope to ultimately affect legislation, but quite often we are reacting to it at the end or what is really close to getting launched. Cutlery knives were the typical example, the rounded knife that you use. We found out in 2021 that suddenly that was going to get caught in the legislation on pointed knives. That is really hard to deal with as a manufacturer. So being in the room to at least understand and interpret. The biggest call out for us was when we went, whether it was the Government themselves, whether it was Trading Standards or the police. There was lots of open interpretation, and where you have open interpretation, it is incredibly hard to navigate because it is not clear at all. One person's interpretation is different to another. We have lots of responsible retailers. I can tell you how in 2019, the amount of retailers who immediately took off knives. Some may say not enough, but I think there are a lot of responsible retailers in the UK. They want to do the right thing. They need to just be given the direction to do that and feel like it is a safe framework to, to operate in.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON Will and Kate, we are sadly out of time. I found this conversation extremely encouraging, and I think there are opportunities here. I hope the people, who can help decide these things have been listening carefully to what you have said. But for now, thank you both very much.



10. Safer Knives in the Home. What Can the Police and Forensic Scientists Contribute?

A dialogue between Leisa Nichols-Drew, Chartered Forensic Scientist and Associate Professor Forensic Biology, De Montfort University and Caley Walden, Violence Reduction Unit Co-Ordinator, Kent Police

LEISA NICHOLS-DREW I am Leisa Nichols-Drew, a Chartered Forensic Practitioner, Associate Professor and a Churchill Fellow.

CALEY WALDEN I am Caley Walden from the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit. In this section, we will showcase how we transition from forensic science practice and research into the policing environment.

LEISA NICHOLS-DREW This is my personal perspective from forensic science casework, with twenty-five years of career experience of undertaking the laboratory examinations of investigations from varied offences including aggravated burglaries, sexual offences, terrorist related, cold cases, and homicides. From my perspective these offences occur in varied geographical locations, from rural communities to urban areas, so in effect incorporating all areas of the UK. Additionally, these examinations incorporate street-based violent incidents and those within the domestic setting. I have examined a plethora of different sharp instruments including axes, scissors, screwdrivers, even those that are self-made, and including extreme weapon types such as machetes, ninja swords, and zombie knives. However, the most prevalent sharp implements submitted to the forensic laboratory, from my experience, are kitchen knives.

Forensic Science Laboratory Examinations: Knives

- Encountered in varied offences
- Investigations from urban **and** rural areas
- Street-based violence **and** domestic incidents
- Multiple evidence opportunities
- Clothing damage examinations
- Reactive (aiding detection)



Safety features in cars, why not our kitchens?

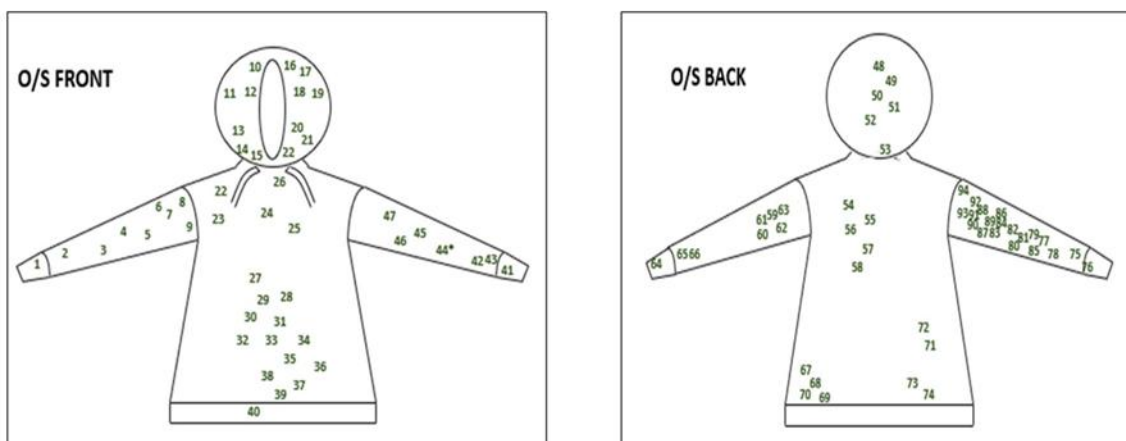
When undertaking the examinations of knives, our strategic approach is designed to maximise the potential recovery of multiple evidences, including biological material that may yield a DNA profile, to

trace material such as hairs and fibres. However, there is a further opportunity for intelligence or an evaluative insight, via clothing damage examinations. Here, we can determine whether the sharp force trauma or penetrative severance damage has been caused by a straight edged or a serrated edged blade. Furthermore, we may also be able to determine the type and directionality of the resulting damage, with microscopic analysis of the garment fabrics.

Traditionally, forensic science is the application of scientific principles to provide answers to legal questions for the Criminal Justice System, for the prosecution and defence. Therefore, a reactive information source to assist the investigation and detection of crime. However, I believe we also have moral obligations to be proactive and aid crime prevention.

Coincidentally, if you look at the image of me captured within the forensic laboratory, I am undertaking the examination of an exhibit. What is this that I am examining? Well, if you have ever had the unfortunate experience of a traffic collision, you would be thankful for this item. Yes, that is correct, it is indeed an airbag. Today, we have multiple safety mechanisms within vehicles including ABS brakes, airbags, and seatbelts. Which begs the question, if we can have these safety features within our cars, why not our kitchens, in relation to our knives?

The following slide is a visual portrayal of how our casework examinations are represented to the jury within a court setting. Along with photography, these diagrams enable us to present our findings in a clear manner. This case, is possibly one of the most extreme clothing damage examinations of my career, involving a domestic related homicide, where the crime scene was the victim's home, the perpetrator was known to the victim, and the weapon was a kitchen knife. Ordinarily, knives are tools to assist us with food preparation, however, at that moment of an altercation, they immediately transition into a weapon. This diagram shows a clothing garment (hooded top), on the left of the screen represented as 'Outside Front', and to the right side as 'Outside Back'. Each of these numbered areas represent a location of sharp force trauma, where the clothing has been penetrated with the point of the blade. Regardless of the blade length, once the point pierces this clothing, there is nothing to stop the motion, as all the force is directed to this one location – the point. Therefore, this increases the likelihood of injury. Each of these locations will have the measurements recorded, to determine the potential blade width and indicate whether this is straight edged or serrated edged damage.



This case resonated with me, and I felt compelled to research scientific literature to gain an insight from other experts in the sector to establish their opinions and experiences with kitchen knives. It was as if I had literally got to the point where I knew change had to happen, and I was determined to try to make a difference and drive this change. I felt that I had a moral obligation to do this, as a safeguarding measure to reduce the harm from kitchen knives. It soon became apparent to me that other experts from diverse subject specialisms were arriving at the same conclusion as me, which gave me further confidence to pursue this both within the UK and also internationally.

Additionally, my current institution is De Montfort University (DMU), which is the only UK university to be an official United Nations Academic Impact (UN AI) Global Hub aligned to the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in particular SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities, having been the previous UN AI Global Hub for SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Stronger Institutions. Furthermore, on our campus we host the Stephen Lawrence Research Centre (SLRC), where we advocate the pursuit of justice. Stephen was fatally stabbed in a street-based violent incident and Stephen's mother Baroness Doreen Lawrence is one of our former Chancellors at DMU. I am also honoured to be a member of the UN Women UK network where VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls) is a worldwide priority. We have already heard from Graham, as to UK statistics on knife related crime activities, and I believe it is also pertinent to investigate whether this is a similar picture internationally. According to the UNODC (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime), within a 2019 publication, there were over 97,000 worldwide homicides. A subsequent UNODC study (2023), reported twenty-two countries around the world as having had mass stabbings. In Europe, over 42% of all homicides were the result of sharp implements, and this was 38% of all homicides in Asia. Therefore, I can confidently conclude that this is a global issue.

2018 Churchill Fellowship

- Australia and Canada
- Opportunity to compare UK practice
- Reactive **and** proactive recommendations




Researching International Forensic Science
Responses in Australia and Canada to aid
the UK Knife Crime Response



Leila Nicholas-Smyth
BSc, MSc, PGDipHE, DPhil
MCRPS SPMIA
Churchill Fellow 2018

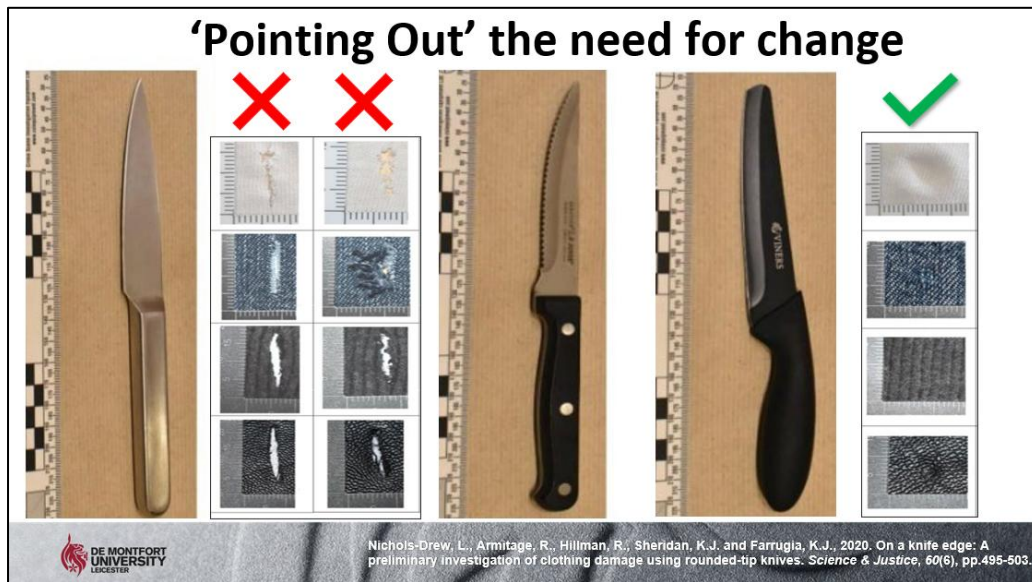




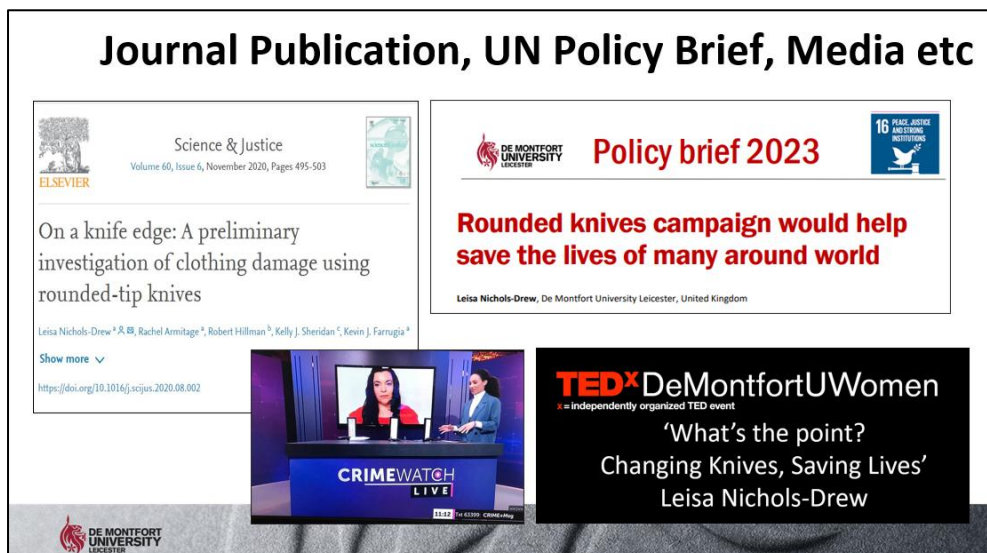

In 2018, I used my casework career experiences, the subject research, and my academic role to apply for a Churchill Fellowship. The Churchill Fellowship (formerly known as the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust) was established in 1965 by Sir Winston Churchill's family following his death as a memorial trust offering funded international travel experiences to anyone from the UK, regardless of age, vocation, or educational background. The only requirement is the identification of an issue within the UK, and the passion to do something about this. I was successfully awarded the funding to travel for seven weeks across Canada and Australia, to investigate their approaches to knife crime investigations so that upon my return to the UK, I could share my learnings to aid the UK situation. My reasoning for travelling to Australia was that the knife was the most commonly encountered weapon, whilst Canada had an issue

with stabbing homicides. The ethos of the Churchill Fellowship is “Travel to learn, Return to Inspire”, and the entire experience was life changing. My Fellowship enabled me access to unique locations including mortuaries, crime scenes, forensic science laboratories, and police agencies (state, province, and federal), to engage with the experts in these justice systems, to exchange our working practices. An output of the Fellowship is the report detailing reactive recommendations to aid detection, along with proactive guidelines to reduce knife injuries (accidents and those from violent interactions).

My Churchill Fellowship led to the research experiments which I conducted in 2020, which Graham kindly alluded to earlier. I conducted a series of simulations involving commonly encountered clothing garments (t-shirt, jeans, leather skirt, jumper) with conventional (pointed) and novel (round ended) knives. Here, we will compare the resulting sharp force trauma (penetrating severance damage) to these garments from the pointed tipped blades.



On the left we have the straight edge knife, and you can see the resulting damage to the clothing surface, and on the right, we have the serrated edge knife which causes significant damage to the garment, with pronounced jagged edges.



Whereas, when you compare it to the round ended knife, you can see there's no penetration at all, which would indicate that there is a reduced risk of harm or injury.

This was the first study in the world to show that there is a correlation between the shape of a kitchen knife blade tip, and the resulting damage from its impact on the clothing surface. This led to a journal publication which was actually published in Operation SCEPTRE week in November 2020, and I subsequently produced a United Nations Policy brief, which has been circulated around the world. This was also communicated via an appearance of BBC Crimewatch Live, a Ted X talk, and at conferences, both in the UK and internationally, online via webinars, which was when Caley first reached out to me.

So, I will now let Caley explain the next part of our story.

CALEY WALDEN

Caley Walden's Story – From Webinar to Action

In 2022, I was attending a webinar online, doing what we all do, half listening while replying to emails. Then Leisa began speaking. The moment she started talking about her research, I stopped. You could not ignore what she was saying.

As someone working in a Violence Reduction Unit, I have seen the devastating impact of knife crime. I have lost young people I worked with. One young man in 2020 was killed over a £50 note. The image of his body appeared on social media that Saturday afternoon while I was out with my children. Next to him was a large kitchen knife, the weapon that ended his life.

I had been to the Ben Kinsella Foundation several times, taken part in their impactful workshop. Listened to countless talks and still could not understand why kitchen knives needed to have such sharp points. I wanted to do something about it.

So when Leisa spoke, I thought: This is a gift. Her research gave me something tangible to work with. I was in a fortunate position - I could act. Leisa had written to the United Nations. Surely, we could do more locally. My question was: What can I do to implement this in our policing area, to protect vulnerable families and make sure that what happened to Jayden never happens again?

I wrote an Operating Procedure. An action plan. It is never easy to get anything through legal services, but with Leisa's research behind me, I got it approved. That meant we could start.

The safer knife replacement (SKRS) scheme was created.

Video footage was shared at the conference. It shows an incident involving a ten-year-old, inside their home. Nobody is hurt in the footage, and the mother gave permission for us to use it for educational purposes. She had no idea rounded-end safer knives even existed. That is why education matters.

(Video transcript omitted for brevity in book format, but context explained in narrative)

The video was filmed using a police body worn camera.

On 8th of August 2025 police were responding to a 999 call made by a parent. Her ten year-old son Joey, in a moment of anger, with a red mist descending with rage, said that he was going to the kitchen to get a knife to stab his 18-month-old sibling. Joey had got to the kitchen and taken the largest knife he could find. Police arrived with mum preventing Joey getting back to the 18-month-old sibling. Within his home, he went for what he believed was the most harmful piece of equipment. He could not see beyond that anger. In the footage it can clearly be seen that Joey attempted to stab his mother several times as she blocked his path. Police arrived and disarmed Joey, removing him from the home

to defuse the situation to prevent harm and allow Joey the space to calm down. Afterwards, the child centred policing team carried out the SKRS in this home.

Providing education and reducing the risk.

How We Do It

We take a large knife tube into a home. It is voluntary. We have no powers to make anyone do this. It is about negotiation, discussion, and education. We are not there for no reason; these are homes where we are needed most.

In a moment of crisis, like the one I described, if we left that mum with five children and said, *“You can do this yourself”*, would she? It is unlikely. It would go to the bottom of her to-do list.

The scheme is to remove ALL the pointed knives into the tube. This house had seven. The most we have taken from one home is twenty-two. We swap them for ONE rounded-end knife, reducing risk, reducing availability.

This also provides accountability to know what you have in a home. In one household a teenager had been caught on the streets. He was involved in county lines activity. Three times police found him in possession of a kitchen knife. His mother had no idea, but these knives had come from her home. On inspection of the home and working with mum, sixteen pointed kitchen knives were found in various places in her home. All were removed and destroyed for one safer knife. This parent now has an awareness of what she has and where that knife is. She can still prepare meals and if it goes missing, she will know sooner rather than later. Her son expressed a dislike for the new knife as he said it was not threatening to take onto the streets; he would be laughed at. This in turn reduces his ability to carry a weapon and cause harm outside the home.

A QR code is scanned and a form completed for the legal waiver, which says the family gives us permission to remove and destroy their pointed knives. Once we leave, we are not responsible for them. The pointed knives are placed in the tube and are safely removed from the home to be destroyed.

A new safer rounded end knife, the one tested in Leisa’s research is then provided.

We count how many knives we remove. Ahead of Operation Sceptre in November 2025, we removed 686 knives from vulnerable households and swapped 150 safer ones. That is 686 fewer knives available in vulnerable homes to cause harm and prevent violence.

We do not just swap knives. We give advice for example but not exclusive of:

- Don’t run to the kitchen during conflict.
- Don’t leave knives on draining boards.
- Don’t store them face-up in dishwashers.
- Avoid magnetic boards or knife blocks.

On a wider scale, the SKRS has been created and set up for police and partner agencies to go into vulnerable households. This is not just for police to action and we have deployed kits to many other services and agencies.



It is just something more we can offer. It is the next step. We are always considering what more we can do.

Who We Help

We offer the Safer Knife Replacement Scheme to:

- Young people arrested for weapon offences or linked to gangs.
- Families affected by domestic abuse.
- Any household flagged as vulnerable.

We also keep it open for other risk factors. We cannot do every household in Kent and Medway, but we try to reach those most at risk.

We work with Alan Bacon from No Point Knives, who supports other houses with encouragement to take part in the scheme. Alan campaigns for retailers to comply with their legal and moral obligations to reduce violence and reduce availability after the sad death of his mother Tracey to knife related violence in her home.

We have created a national working group for SKRS. We have shared our SOP, legal waiver, and parent guide with other policing areas. With five counties following the Kent SKRS operating procedures and joining us in reducing knives and making the safer rounded end knife part of the safety plan and kitchen utensil within homes. This project has been recognised by the College of Policing and is published in their practice bank, on their website [Kent and Medway safer knife replacement scheme | College of Policing](#)

After Leanne Lucas was on the news with her campaign “Let’s be Blunt”, the Kent control room received 150 calls within ten minutes from the public asking to take part in the scheme or asking how they should dispose of their weapons, should they want to do it themselves. We realised there was no national, written advice or guidance on how you can safely and legally remove your pointed knives from your house yourself.

Recognised on the College of Policing website

The scheme is now recognised on the College of Policing website. You can find more details about the scheme, in relation to:

- Aim
- Intended Outcome
- Description
- SKRS eligibility
- Encouraging Participation
- How The Knife-Swap Works
- Protocol For Case Workers
- Costs
- Overall Impact
- Feedback and Learning



We went back to Legal Services, and we have written it.

Knives are essential kitchen tools, but in some circumstances, they can pose a risk to individuals and communities. To help prevent accidents and misuse, many households and community safety initiatives are opting to remove or replace sharp-pointed knives. This must be done carefully and legally to ensure safety and compliance with the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 and other relevant legislation.

Safe Removal and Replacement Procedure

1. Assess and Plan
 - Identify which knives in the home may pose a risk — typically those with long blades or pointed ends.
 - Set aside time to carry out the removal with appropriate tools (gloves, boxes, tape).
 - If carrying out as part of a community initiative, ensure volunteers are trained and DBS checked where appropriate.
2. Use Protective Equipment
 - Wear cut-resistant gloves to prevent injury.
 - Handle all knives with care, keeping blades pointed away from yourself and others.
 - Do not attempt to carry large quantities at once.
3. Safe Packaging
 - Wrap knives individually using newspaper, cardboard, or bubble wrap.
 - Secure the wrapped knife with tape, making sure no blade is exposed.
 - Place wrapped knives in a rigid container such as a cardboard box or plastic storage tub with a lid.
 - Label the container clearly with “Sharp Objects – Handle with Care.”
4. Legal Disposal Options
 - Do not dispose of knives in household rubbish or recycling bins - this is dangerous and may be illegal.

- Take knives to your local authority's household waste recycling centre (HWRC), ensuring they accept sharp items.
- Some police stations operate knife amnesty bins. You can deposit knives safely and anonymously.
- Always transport knives in sealed containers and keep them in the car boot when travelling to a disposal site.

5. Replacing with Safer Alternatives

- Rounded-tip knives are widely available and offer reduced risk without sacrificing utility in most food preparation tasks.
- Consider purchasing knives with ergonomic handles and non-slip grips for added safety.
- For schools, community kitchens, and vulnerable households, prioritise safety-rated cutlery.

6. Legal Considerations

- The possession and transport of knives in public without a lawful reason is an offence under the Criminal Justice Act 1988.
- Ensure your purpose is clearly lawful (e.g. transporting knives for disposal or replacement).
- Avoid carrying knives on public transport if possible; use a vehicle and keep items sealed and out of reach.
- Never sell or pass on sharp knives to anyone under 18.

7. Community Engagement

- Promote knife safety initiatives through local newsletters, social media, and schools.
- Encourage community buy-in by explaining the purpose — reducing domestic accidents and preventing knife misuse.
- Work with local police or councils if planning a wider knife collection programme.

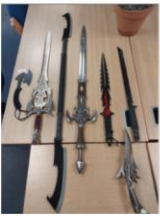
Positive Outcome: Knife Surrender and Removal Scheme (SKRS)

CID Tonbridge successfully applied the SKRS during a domestic abuse investigation, enhancing victim safety and reducing harm.

Following the arrest of a suspect for threats to kill, officers conducted a Section 18 search and with VRU guidance, engaged the victim in the scheme.

This led to the voluntary surrender of several knives and removal of all kitchen knives from the property.

The proactive use of SKRS provided reassurance to the victim, strengthened engagement, and mitigated the risk of serious harm—demonstrating the scheme's value as an additional safeguarding tool in domestic abuse cases.




Conclusion

Reducing the number of pointed or potentially dangerous knives in the home is a positive step towards improving household and community safety. By following this guidance, individuals and groups can

take meaningful action while staying within the bounds of the law. Always prioritise safety, discretion, and proper disposal channels.

Now our control room has accurate and consistent messaging.

Case Study: Domestic Abuse

A 999 call came from a neighbour reporting threats to kill. The man said, “I’m going to kill you and I’m going to use my knives.”

Officers attended and arrested the male for threats to kill. He was very agitated and needed to be removed from the home, but the female in the home was reluctant to engage. She knew he would likely be back within twenty-four hours and feared more harm if she cooperated.

It was decided that the home needed to be searched for weapons, we communicated that a good way to engage would be to return with the SKRS and have a conversation of support. Start with a conversation: “We’d like to remove all the knives and replace them with safer ones. It’s your choice.”

She agreed. She even showed officers where he kept his knives. Those knives were removed. That conversation-built trust and reduced risk. The knives that the female in this home recovered for officers are shown in the image above and we now had an engaging victim to support.

Kent has recently had its first domestic homicide review where they are including, the Safer Knife Replacement Scheme as a recommendation. This is the result of a homicide within student accommodation at a university.

An adult female student stabbed her husband in the back with a large kitchen knife. The review acknowledged that if a rounded end knife had been in the home, the male would have been more likely to have received bruising. This would have provided him time to remove himself from the escalating situation and make himself safe.

As one of the recommendations, we have been asked to go into all the university campuses in Kent and do the Safer Knife Replacement Scheme. That will be happening in January.

On December 9th 2025, we are including all our pupil referral units. The scheme has been implemented in children's care homes and our family hubs. We are still in the process of swapping within all our community centres, because that is where people go to learn to cook and they all cook together. We want them all to be the normal kitchen utensil, less alarming, less threatening and less attractive to use as a tool to scare or harm another person.

Let's Be Blunt – Make the Change, Save a life

We proudly stand with Leanne Lucas and the *Let's Be Blunt* campaign.

This campaign is encouraging households across our community to take the pledge and become a 'Rounded End Home.'

Together, we can make a real difference by promoting safer, healthier environments for everyone.





LEISA NICHOLS-DREW We are having proactive conversations at my university at the moment because of our status as the United Nations hub for SDG 11, which is sustainable Cities and Communities.

I am hopeful that we can start to also make that change in time.

We have had a favourable response so far. So, I am hoping that will lead to more institutions across the sector and in other environments as well.

[NOTE: On December 2nd, De Montfort University decided to become a safer knife organisation.]

CALEY WALDEN We have also worked with Clarion who get our homeless people into supported accommodation. These knives in the new house packs are going in for the resettlement of people. They are now getting the rounded packs as well.

Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit do a lot of education, and there is a lot of other work that goes in around knife crime. We have had a 17.4% reduction in knife crime in Kent. This is significant. We are hoping to continue that.

It is also important to talk about cost. The expense of implementing this process is extremely low. The knife tubes we use are recycled from our property stores. So, there is no cost for those. The legal waiver is also free. In practice, each swap costs just £1.33. Considering the number of knives we remove and the safety we provide, this is a remarkably small price for such a significant impact.

We are exploring wider applications, student housing, workplace kitchens, supported accommodation, mental health settings. Vulnerable people deserve safer environments.

We also work closely with our Integrated Offender Management teams to support individuals released from prison. Recently, four new supported living accommodations opened in Kent for prison leavers, and each of these properties received rounded-end knives in their kitchens.

I make it a priority to introduce safer knives wherever possible, whether that is in supported housing, children's homes, foster placements, or emergency foster care. If there is any setting in Kent where this can reduce risk, we will do everything we can to make it happen. We explore every avenue.

MOHSIN KHAN I am a forensic psychiatrist. I often work with people who have conditions either from parole officers or restricted patients who have Ministry of Justice conditions that may say things like they cannot use drugs. They might have to allow people to examine their homes and so forth. I was wondering, have you encountered cases where probation officers, MOJ or other people might set a condition that provides that particular individuals need to replace the knives in their homes?

I was just wondering if that is an avenue that people might think about, for that sector to come forward in our Safer Knife Group.

LEISA NICHOLS-DREW We are working in the domestic abuse setting, and we have worked with partners and other agencies around the country. That is an area where we could explore working more collaboratively.

JOHN CRICHTON I can add from Scotland that that is now a regular condition on conditional discharge requirements for restricted patients with a history of knife use. So, it can absolutely be done.

DUNCAN BEW I entirely agree with what you said about patients who are vulnerable from a mental health perspective. We have elderly patients in particular who are discharged home from hospitals. Every day we check to see if they can manage the stairs and see if they are going to leave the gas on.

We do not necessarily check their drawers to make sure that they have not got pointed weapons in their kitchens. We do have a distinct issue with elderly people, particularly recently widowed, committing suicide.

I think there is a huge applicability to a really broad range of vulnerabilities in which there is a really common consensus in which we agree that there are vulnerable people who we have guardianship over or support over who are already identified in the community who would really benefit from a wider scope of that's being implemented. I do not know if that has been discussed in Kent, but has there been any extrapolation or discussion about vulnerable people in a broader sense as well as just those who you encounter through the criminal justice system?

CALEY WALDEN We do work with our integrated offender management teams as well for the prison releases. We have just had four new supported living accommodations opened for prison releases in Kent. All four of those had their rounded-end knives, safer knives delivered last week. We do try to put them everywhere we can. I am trying to get them into children's homes and for foster carers. If there is somewhere in Kent where I can add them, absolutely I will. We, we do look at every avenue.

DUNCAN BEW Yes. A clear policy change and a behavioural change that would certainly create a huge impetus and a justification for a business case for the manufacturers and retailers.

LEANNE LUCAS I just want to thank Caley and Leisa for their support and work. Caley does fantastic work in this area and I am sure she will agree that we should highlight Wigan. We have Andrea and Councillor Kevin Anderson. They have become a Let's Be Blunt local authority. You create such a good case study and a precedent by what you are doing in your area. It is so helpful to see that up and down the country.

COUNCILLOR KEVIN ANDERSON From Wigan Council. Supporting Leanne's campaign, Let's Be Blunt was a no brainer for us. It is not to say that we have a particular issue with knives and knife crime in the borough, but combined with an increase in disposal points and Stop the Bleed training, we felt that we were compelled really to support Leanne in that campaign. We are trying to spread that across Greater Manchester as well. I think you have a meeting with Andy Burnham in the near future. So that is, that's good as well. We are hoping that other local authorities will catch on as well and do the same work that we are doing in terms of replacing knives in vulnerable households, in community venues, and in our own venues across the borough. I am sure one life saved is worth it.



11. Psychiatry and Safer Knife Design: A Conversation

Professor John Crichton, consultant forensic psychiatrist, in dialogue with Dr Lade Smith, President, Royal College of Psychiatrists

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON Well, a change of pace again, colleagues. I hope that by having slightly different forms of presentation we can keep you engaged in this post-prandial slot after lunch. My original plan for the next session was to interview my good friend Lade Smith, who I will get to introduce herself in a moment. Her idea was to interview me. So, we thought we would have a conversation. And if we dry up a little bit, like a famous Monty Python film, we have some conversation prompts. But Lade, would you like to introduce yourself?

DR LADE SMITH Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Lade Smith. I am President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists. I am a consultant in forensic psychiatry and I work at the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. I am responsible for all the acute forensic admissions for South London. That means Oxleas, South London and Maudsley, and South West London and St George's. In fact I screen every single referral.

These are people who have behaved violently. Most of the time they are being referred from prison, sometimes from the community. Many of them are graduates from general adult psychiatric services and they have often been known for quite a long time. When they have behaved violently, sometimes it does not involve a weapon, but when it does it is usually a knife. I go and meet these people and, until recently, I was overseeing the services for that group. So, this is an area that is very close to my heart professionally and otherwise.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON I have to say that the College has done us proud today in supporting this event, and I think we have all benefited from the help of the events team and everyone here. But why should psychiatrists be really interested in the design of kitchen knives?

DR LADE SMITH To be honest with you, John, I was going to ask you that. Because if you look at the risk factors for gang affiliation – and it was interesting what Sarah Jones was saying earlier – those risk factors are very similar to the risk factors that forensic psychiatrists would list for someone becoming one of our patients.

They include things from early life: parental separation, abuse, trauma, neglect and so on. If you showed that list to a bunch of forensic psychiatrists, they would say these are risk factors for someone becoming one of my patients. A criminologist would say these are risk factors for gang affiliation. It is really obvious. I often say to people: if only I had met this man who I am meeting at 23 when he was two or three, or when his mum, who had substance use issues, first presented when she was pregnant. So, my question to you is, given everything we know about risk factors, why focus on the design of a knife?

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON It is a good question and it goes to the crux of why this has been a focus of activity. For me, it goes back to a clinical case. That case was a tragedy, and we are familiar with all sorts of tragedies in this room.

It involved a mother who was on the eve of a custody dispute and who had come to the dreadful position of thinking that it was a fate worse than death for her children to go to the custody their father. She planned for their deaths and for her own. She put the domestic gas supply on, believing – wrongly – that natural gas would give everyone a peaceful death and that they would wake up in heaven. Of course, natural gas does not do that; that was only the case with coal gas, rich in carbon monoxide.

When the neighbours knocked on the door, she panicked. She thought it was court officers coming to take the children away. She was staying in temporary accommodation. On the kitchen side was a block of kitchen knives. She used those to kill the children.

That case resonated with me deeply because one of the reasons I went into psychiatry was that my uncle, who died before I was born, took his life by carbon monoxide poisoning. Something doctors learn at medical school is that one of the most profound reductions in suicide in this country followed the change from coal gas to natural gas². Simply removing a highly lethal and highly available domestic means changed behaviour. There was minimal substitution. Suicide rates dropped by around 30% purely from changing the gas supply.

again and again, the implement used in a homicide was a domestic kitchen knife

Following this case, I took a sabbatical and looked at about 250 homicides involving those in contact with mental health services³. With that recent case in my mind, again and again I came across scenarios where the implement used in a homicide was a domestic kitchen knife. In official statistics they would simply be referred to as sharp instrument homicides, but it was clear that kitchen knives were used most commonly.

That led to a series research projects looking specifically at the frequency of kitchen knife use in homicides⁴. In Scotland, we found a very high frequency of kitchen knife use in homicides that were otherwise simply described as sharp-instrument homicides, findings now mirrored in Home Office statistics for England.

² Kreitman N. The coal gas story. United Kingdom suicide rates, 1960–71. *British Journal of Preventive & Social Medicine*. 1976; 30: 86–93.

³ Crichton JHM. A review of published independent inquiries in England into psychiatric patient homicide, 1995–2010. *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology*. 2011; 22: 761–789

⁴ Hughes NS, Macaulay AM and Crichton JHM. Kitchen knives and homicide by mentally disordered offenders: a systematic analysis of homicide inquiries in England 1994–2010. *J Forensic Psychiatry Psychol* 2012; 23(5–6): 559–570

Kidd SH, Hughes NS, Crichton JHM. Kitchen knives and homicide: a systematic study of people charged with murder in the Lothian and Borders Region of Scotland. *Medicine Science and the Law*. 2013; 54: 167–173.

Crichton JHM (2017) Falls in Scottish homicide: Lessons for homicide reduction in mental health patients. *British Journal of Psychiatry Bulletin*. 41 185–6.

So, I asked myself: what would have happened if there had been a safer kitchen knife design in that temporary accommodation? The sequence of events could have been interrupted. In the same way that limiting access to large quantities of paracetamol can interrupt impulsive suicide attempts, safer knife design can interrupt impulsive violence.

DR LADE SMITH But trauma surgeons sometimes say, “This is all very well, but when people are in a frenzy, like your patients, they slash – they don’t stab.” A very well-known trauma surgeon said to me, “They slash, they don’t thrust.” How do you respond to that?

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON In one Edinburgh cohort we had all the post-mortems, and Duncan Bew – who is here today – can speak to this more eloquently than I can. But in that cohort all the deaths were caused by penetration of major vessels. None was caused by slashing. Looking back over all the cases I have dealt with over the years – and they must number in the hundreds – I can think of only one in which death was caused by slashing.

There is a temptation to focus too much on exotic weaponry, but what my research showed was that, although stranger attacks with unusual weapons get more publicity⁵, mental-health-related homicides are more often domestic, involving people who know each other, using kitchen knives.

DR LADE SMITH Everyone knows that the rate of homicide among people with mental illness has not significantly increased over the years. But how often is the pointed knife the decisive factor?

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON In my experience the point is the decisive factor in almost all sharp-instrument homicides involving people with mental illness. Duncan is nodding. Of course, we do not know what would have happened if a pointed knife had not been available, but the potential for interruption is clear.

We heard this morning an extraordinary example from Kent of a child in great distress who was disarmed by police officers. I have given talks on this in many contexts. In one of them, to a group of sheriffs in Aberdeen, a sheriff spoke very movingly about his elderly parents. One had early dementia and, losing their temper, had picked up a kitchen knife and stabbed the other in the hand; the knife went through the hand. That was the beginning and the end of the trauma, but it was a significant event. In a safer kitchen environment, that would not have happened.

DR LADE SMITH Most violence perpetrated by people with mental illness is against people they know. When my patients leave hospital, many go into supported accommodation. Is there something we should be asking for there?

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON We heard earlier from Caley Walden about how the Violence Reduction Unit in Kent identifies high-risk households and swaps pointed knives for safer alternatives. I confess that in Edinburgh I sometimes did something similar – without such a comprehensive protocol. I went into supported accommodation and removed pointed kitchen knives, replacing them with safer ones.

We also had an important contribution earlier from a forensic psychiatry colleague about conditions of conditional discharge for restricted patients⁶. We are beginning in Scotland to see such conditions including safer-kitchen requirements. But as a forensic community we have not been strong on

⁵ Kalucy M, Rodway C. Finn J. Swinson N. Roscoe A. Da Cruz D. Appleby L. and Shaw J Comparison of British National Newspaper Coverage of Homicide Committed by Perpetrators with and Without Mental Illness, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 2011, 45, pp. 53

⁶ Section 37/41 MHA 1983

situational crime prevention. We write 50- or 60-page risk assessments, but I can show pictures of kitchen knives from the homes of discharged patients in the community whose index offence was with a kitchen knife.

Much of our career is about secondary prevention – responding after tragedy. But what about primary prevention? General adult colleagues see people who have used weapons when distressed, or who have self-harmed with knives. Are these opportunities to intervene early?

DR LADE SMITH Yes, and the financial argument is striking. How much does an inpatient stay in one of my secure units cost? It is about £800 a day. In some cases, more expensive than staying at the Dorchester. The average length of stay in a medium secure unit is fourteen to sixteen months. Some people stay for five years.

So, we are looking at costs of £400,000 to £450,000 per year per patient. By contrast, a general adult admission is four to six weeks. And 98% of mental health care is in the community, costing about £5,000 a year per patient.

Around 75% of people in forensic units are graduates from general adult psychiatry. They have been known for years, with the same problems. This time round, if they have attacked someone with a weapon, it is usually a kitchen knife. So many tragedies, and so much cost, could have been avoided.

So, there is a space here for primary prevention. Safer knife design is a simple public health intervention. And you know something is a good idea when the arguments against it are weak. People say, “How do you cook without a pointed knife?” I think you manage quite well. We do not need pointed knives for most tasks.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON Lade – you have heard me on this topic many times. What might the College do?

*when you redesign opportunity,
behaviour changes without
needing to change attitudes*

DR LADE SMITH Listening today, what strikes me is that we are not educating psychiatrists enough about this – and not educating other health professionals. I am not sure we are educating our patients, either.

We do extensive risk assessment and risk management – now “with” people rather than “to” people. We help people understand their risks and the consequences violence can have for them. But I cannot recall us ever saying to a patient: “When you move out, consider having blunt-tipped knives so that if something goes wrong, it is harder to do serious harm.”

This seems like a simple public health message. We should be messaging this to the general public and especially to high-risk groups.

We help the person to understand what their risks are, because if you perpetrate violence against somebody else, that is not only bad for them but that causes you enormous problems for the rest of your life. It is in their interests not to be someone who is going to be violent again.

We work with people to help them recognise what helps to mitigate the risk factors for them becoming violent. But I have to say, I cannot think of any time when we have said to someone, “Why don’t we think about, when you move out, having rounded knives, so that if something does go wrong – if you

do find yourself smoking cannabis and getting ill again – then, if something happens, it is less likely to hurt someone.”

We can train psychiatrists – that is a major part of what we do. We can lobby government. We talk to senior decision-makers all the time. We can emphasise that when people are treated properly, the risks they pose are very low.

Recidivism among forensic psychiatry patients is about 3%. Among non-mentally-disordered offenders it is between 25% and 50%. So, we do something very well in forensic psychiatry, but that does not apply to everyone else.

If we use those arguments, we can say that safer knife design is an additional tool in our armoury to reduce impulsive acts. Many of the violent acts we see are impulsive. Some people carry knives because they are paranoid. If they carry a blunted knife, it will do less damage.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON We have a few minutes. Let us open this up to the floor.

LEE McSTEIN, WIGAN COUNCIL If we are talking about safer knife protocols in forensic environments, can we think about them for patients coming out under community treatment orders? I have worked with patients who have self-harmed by stabbing themselves. If they had rounded knives, they could not do that with something easily reached in the home. They might find other methods, but not that.

DR LADE SMITH I agree but I do not think it needs to be restricted to CTOs. It should be a universal message, with targeted emphasis on people who self-harm, forensic patients and others at high risk.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON Duncan, would you like to come in?

DUNCAN BEW Yes. There are months when 50% of the patients I see with penetrating injuries have self-inflicted them. We see a broad range. People focus on under-25s, but we see peaks in the teens, middle age and older years, particularly recently-widowed individuals.

Weapon type varies. We see slashing injuries from box cutters, but we also see devastating penetrating injuries from pointed kitchen knives. People drive knives through their mediastinum, into spine or pelvis, through bone into major vessels. Some of these injuries are unsurvivable even if the trauma team is on scene immediately.

So, I do not accept the idea that self-harm in crisis is mainly slashing. It is not. The only way to prevent these devastating injuries is to remove or redesign the means.

PROFESSOR GRAHAM FARRELL I was struck by John’s reference to the change from toxic to non-toxic gas and its impact on suicide. That comes straight out of situational crime prevention. Clarke and Mayhew’s⁷ work – which earned them the Stockholm Prize in Criminology – showed that when you remove or redesign opportunity, behaviour changes without needing to change attitudes first. Changing the design of everyday objects has a lasting impact.

That is exactly what safer knife design is: a situational prevention measure with a very strong evidence base.

⁷ Clarke RV, Mayhew P. The British gas suicide story and its criminological implications. *Crime and Justice*. 1988; 79-116.

DR LADE SMITH Listening to this, I am thinking about what we can do. One thing that can make a real difference is a well-written, well-timed letter. We have so many stakeholders here today. Perhaps a joint letter – to the Home Office and to the Secretary of State for Health – setting out the evidence and proposing a clear plan, would be extremely powerful.

PROFESSOR JOHN CRICHTON I think we can all agree that situational crime prevention is coming home – back to psychiatry. Lade, thank you very much. And thank you to everyone here at the College for hosting us and for the thoughtful contributions.

12. The Way Forward: Panel Discussion and Plenary

Members of the Safer Knives Group: Nic Madge, John Crichton, Andy Slaughter MP, Duncan Bew, Leisa Nichols-Drew, Graham Farrell and Patrick Green with plenary contributions from other delegates

MICHAEL PHIPPS I am from the Community Safety Partnership at Wigan Council. Thank you all for an excellent conference. I have found it very, very enjoyable, very worthwhile and very inspiring. This is probably more of an observation. I hear quite often the words, “knife amnesty bins” and “knife surrender bins”. I am wondering whether that terminology itself might be a problem. We talked about whether we call them “blunt knives” or whether they should be “safer knives”. But I think that the terminology that we are using on the disposal bins is also an issue. I will bring it back to my own area. We have started to put in a number of disposal bins around our borough because up until that point, we had a knife amnesty bin in the front desk of Wigan Police Station where there is a CCTV camera. For the type of people that we were wanting to surrender knives, the only way they would go into the police station was through the back door into the custody office. So, I would suggest that the chances of you getting somebody walking into a police station to deposit a knife that they were going to use for illegal purposes was extremely slim. We then had a big push around an amnesty. When you put bins into communities, there was an instant fear of crime because people thought, “have we got a knife problem in our area?” Now, in Wigan, like many areas, fortunately we have not had a major incident or anything like that to speak about. We are trying to be preventative before such an incident happens. But equally, we are very close to Southport. So, that absolutely hits home with a lot of the residents in our borough. But just by that simple change of name to referring to “disposal bins”, we put four in place across four areas of our borough. We put four out there within the community four months ago. We have had 300 knives back in that period, including two firearms deposited in those bins. That is because they have been accepted by the community. What we are really trying to push now is that we need to make knife disposal bins, just like you would recycle your bottles, your shoes, your CDs, your books, and you actually get them out there. This is where you get rid of your knives as opposed to, “you only put your knives in here if it's an amnesty because we are not going to prosecute you”. I think that is the mindset we really need to push. If that was pushed nationally, the fear of actually having a knife disposal bin in your area would not be there because everybody would say, “Oh, that's just the knife bin. That's where you get rid of your knives if you want to.” Like I said, 300 knives in just over four months, for an area that we don't believe has a knife problem. It was the whole range of knives. The bulk of them were kitchen knives, but included in that are some machetes, meat cleavers, swords and all sorts of the sorts of knives that we have referred to today. So, I am just wondering whether if that was pushed nationally, the fear of having a knife disposal bin in your area wouldn't be there.

LEISA NICHOLS-DREW I have to agree with you. I think the terminology is really important. I know having spoken to your colleagues from Wigan, the choice of terminology is really important. So, even where you may wish to use knife deposit bin, I think it is really important to engage with community partners in recycling centres so the public are informed. Caley has alluded to the fact that people ring

up the control room asking where you deposit knives. So, the public want to know and to make them actively change their behaviour and be proactive. I think that that is an integral part of it, that we all work with our community partners in recycling centres. I think that is a really proactive measure. You are ahead of the curve. You are the first.

WILL JONES Just following on from that point, which I think is a really interesting one. To put it in context, if we are talking about kitchen knives, if you were to take, twenty million households and then look at how many knives you estimate there are in those households. We estimate it is between fourteen and sixteen knives in each household, and we estimate about 60% of them have points on the end of them. But I still quite like what the gentleman is advocating because if you got consensus and this whole initiative gained momentum, surely it would be simple for Government to then get councils involved. You look at your recycling and you look at why not give everybody the opportunity, with a coordinated campaign. Never mind amnesty bins. This is just at home. Get rid of them. You might be surprised at how many old knives are sitting at the bottom of drawers. I know I was surprised when I checked. So, I think that is a really good idea and I think it should be straightforward to think how that could roll out into a nationwide campaign.

ANDY SLAUGHTER MP I am an MP in Hammersmith and I am the chair of the Justice Select Committee, but none of that has anything to do with my involvement, which is through Nic and the others, in being a convert and now proselytiser for the Safer Knives Group. I will speak briefly because, as you probably noticed, I have not been here today because, we had two justice statements in the House of Commons, which I had to be there for. So that is a shame.

I can offer no expertise, but I hope I can be a major lobbyist with Government in relation to this and in changing opinions within Government and government ministers. Left wing governments are of course the most conservative of bodies to try effect change upon. I would say perfectly honestly that when I first I heard of the initiative, I thought this is not going to work because people are not going to do it. But the more I thought about it, the more I thought how controversial the issue of knife crime is and how people have been outraged. Almost every MP will have had not one, but several young people killed in their constituency. I have visited the families and understand the implications. So just talking about rounded knives, we are actually not asking people a lot. Some people say, "it is a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Why should we all have to change our lives, change everything in our kitchen drawers? Isn't that an extreme reaction?" In fact, if you look at it properly, it is exactly the opposite of that. It is a very minor change in behaviour and a very manageable change in how the mechanics of it operate from manufacturers to disposal and things of that kind. I think people are waking up to that and MPs are waking up every time we debate it.

You heard from Sarah Jones earlier today. I have had long discussions with her, and she of course used to chair the All Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime. Increasingly among civil servants, among the ministers and among back bench MPs, I think the light bulb is going on in their offices. Once that happens, once you can have that societal change, once you can change people's opinion, people begin to see that this is a sensible thing to do. My own practice now is simply that I just buy rounded knives with no tips. It does require a bit of a sea change in terms of political opinion. We are getting towards that change of opinion.

TOM HUMPHRIES I am a police officer from South Yorkshire involved in the Hotspot Funding. So, to follow on from the amnesty bins, I had a conversation a couple of days ago with a colleague about the word amnesty bin. As a police officer detecting crime, if we are saying it is an amnesty bin, the expectation is that once it is in there, there will be no prosecution. What happens with that knife if I am either a victim of crime or a relative of a victim of crime and a knife that has been used is

deposited in one of those bins. I am interested in your thoughts around the moral, ethical, and legal position of what that bin is. If it is an amnesty bin that does not get checked by the police for anything that is used as a weapon of an offence, are knives going to get put in there? So, what are your thoughts on that?

LEISA NICHOLS-DREW Well regarding the evidential value from an amnesty bin as you quoted, the chain of evidence would be difficult for a particular investigation, obviously.

BRENDAN MURRAY I am from the National Police Knife Crime Working Group. I am also a police officer. I am the National Knife Crime Coordinator. I work with Patrick and many others on the National Working Group. I hope I can give a fairly positive answer to your question. First of all, if one looks at the term amnesty, it suggests a governmental pardon. That does not work. That is not what we are looking to do. It does not serve the victims of knife crime. It does not serve a positive message to the community, and it is absolutely not what we are looking to achieve. That is the first thing. Somehow it has slipped into the vernacular that we talk about amnesty bins and it has not worked.

This is Sceptre Week, which I think most of us are aware of. It has been my pleasure and privilege to have run it for the last two or three years. I have been pushing more and more to remove the term amnesty bin. Initially, we were really unclear, and we faced a bit of pushback, believe it or not, with surrender bins, where academically it was said, "Well, you're taking these knives off the street, but there's no empirical data that says knife crime reduces." But it is inherently the right thing to give more and more options.

*we need to normalise
the disposal of knives*

I was interested earlier to hear from Leisa's and Caley's perspectives that people, just don't know how to get rid of knives. I am afraid it is true. So, if a mother clears out a drawer and wants to get rid of a pointed knife, what does she do with it? Does she know where to take it? No, she does not. Not every local government

offers an explanation as to how to do that. There is a logic about wrapping them up and depositing them. We have heard about the availability of pointed knives and frankly, people just do not know how to get rid of them. We need to do more of that. This year has been incredibly successful. We heard mention of Faron Paul Knife Amnesty – it is unfortunate that he uses the word "amnesty", but that is his trading name - and extended surrender schemes as well as the surrender and compensation schemes, which we have seen following Ronan's Law and the banning of zombie style knives and things like that. Our view is that we do not want to wait until we ban something to offer compensation and surrender schemes. We are going to look to do that, at least boosted and bolstered every time we run Sceptre. But more and more we need to challenge, unfortunately, community groups that say, "We don't want a bin here. It suggests that we have a problem with violence." We need, dare I say it, to normalise the deposition of regular household knives. It has to become a thing. It has to be well known. But we do need to manage as well the niche for people who are carrying prohibited weapons and allow them, not if they have been used in crime, but allow them to get rid of them in a way that maybe if it is done properly, they could do so without prosecution. So those are the kind of bins that we are talking about: taking knives generally from younger people that they should not have and want to get rid of. Absolutely right, we need to come away from the term "amnesty" and we need to normalise the disposal of knives.

PAMELA TAYLOR I am a forensic psychiatrist. Just on that last point. I want to emphasise the importance of having whole systems to support this because just having a surrender bin, if it fills up

with knives, if it is anything like the paper bins or the bottle disposal bins, it is adding danger, not relieving it.

There were a couple of things I wanted to pick up from what Sarah Jones said. Mostly, I felt that she was really on side and really ready to listen. That is why I think it is worth picking them up.

The first thing that she said was that violence is not inevitable. Now, as a psychiatrist, I have to tell you, I am afraid it is. If we were all honest in this room, I do not think there would be a single person who could put their hand on their heart and say that they had never been violent. It might have been violent in quite a small way, and you might not have actually hurt anybody, but I am afraid that violence is part of being a human. So, this is what makes the Safer Knives campaign so much more important because it can affect the way it turns out. We can maybe reduce violence, but we are never going to stop it altogether. We need to make it safer. That is the most important thing.

The second thing is that she raised this question of penalties, and I really cannot let that pass because again, I have never actually personally met anyone, except possibly a truly organised crime person, who calculates how long they are going to get in prison if they get caught. They just don't. It is not relevant. What is relevant is the likelihood of getting caught. So, the police force really needs adequate support in all this. Above all the knowledge and the understanding of how devastating these kinds of behaviours are to human lives. I am afraid that the penalty is almost immaterial.

NIC MADGE Can I agree with that? As someone who has imposed lengthy sentences on people who have committed violent crimes with knives, I can say that most people do not think logically before they commit acts of violence. Many of the defendants that I sentenced acted without thinking. The motivation varied according to the circumstances. Domestic violence. Often in the heat of the moment. Youths taking a knife out on the street. They did so from fear, kudos, all kinds of reasons. But did they think what would happen? Most often, no. Did they think they were going to use the knife? Sometimes, but often not. Some were injured with their own knives. Did they think that the knife that they took out was going to be used against them and they were going to be injured? No, they did not. It is because of that lack of thought - not in every case, but in many cases - that deterrence does not work. What detention does – whether in prison or in a Young Offender Institution – what detention for young people does is it stops them committing crimes on the street or outside, for the length of their sentence. It does not stop them committing crimes inside and it does not reform them. It warehouses them, but it is not a deterrent.

*most people do not think
logically before they
commit acts of violence*

ALAN BACON Alan from No Point Knives. I carry out a lot of surveys going around supermarkets. Access to 90% at the moment is atrocious. 90% of them have signed what is called a voluntary agreement. It is all being read in different ways. For example, there are a couple that do the cabinets, locked cabinets. There are some that do little locks on things.

There are some that do not seem to care. And there are also a couple of supermarkets that will not sign it. Would you agree with me that legislation needs to be brought in, that they all have to sell pointed knives in a certain way, with locked cabinets behind the counter, in the same way that fireworks or cigarettes are displayed?

NIC MADGE Absolutely. One of the things that we, as the Safer Knives Group, did was to draft amendments that Andy tabled when the Crime and Policing Bill was in Committee Stage. One was an

amendment to prevent delivery of remotely purchased pointed knives to residential addresses. The other was precisely what you said, to make it illegal for shops to display knives openly, effectively, to introduce a legislative system, which was similar to that which applies to tobacco, where the tobacco is not visible. It is not available. As I have already said, we have a very recent case where knives were apparently stolen from a well-known supermarket and used the next day in particularly violent offences.

BRUCE HOULDER I have had over fifty years either defending or prosecuting or sentencing people who have committed violent offences. I have attended a lot of these kinds of conferences and I am now running a charity to fight knife crime in London. I have to congratulate this conference for achieving something which is not often seen. Patrick mentioned that he had been saying the same things for twenty, thirty years and not seeing them acted upon. This conference has concentrated on one particular issue, the issue of safer knives. We have had the right speakers here who have made the right, intelligent contributions and educated us all. That is what is important. I came here not knowing half of the stuff that I have learned about today, even though I read dozens of newsletters from organisations working in this field and produce one myself. So, that is a big plus. We have had recommendations about how to carry things forward. We have had contributions from the police, from the Home Office and from the Minister, a very impressive contribution from the Minister today, if I may say so.

But what I find lacking where I sit, is providing information resources in this area. It is the lack of positive communication from the centre of government about these things. They are not getting into the journalistic commentariat and getting them to write about this sort of stuff and educate everybody in the way that we have all been educated today.

There is a need for better communication from the Home Office and the PMs Coalition on Preventing Knife Crime. I get their requests to publicise their successes in reducing knife crime which I always share. I write back and I support them by putting it out there, telling people what the Home Office are doing, but at present it is all about the success statistics (and possibly questionable ones) reducing trends in knife crime to serve the Home Office PR. More needs to be done to dispel some myths about knife crime, and drive legislation which is more than cosmetic. The electorate, and the press that serves them, need to be trusted to become more nuanced in their thinking, but for that they need to be given the actual facts. I think that the real work against retailers in the grey market has to come rather later. Anyone would think it was all about zombie knives which are only about 4% of the those which result in homicide.

The arguments are not there. We are not reading about what we have learned today. You will not convince people that rounded knives are the answer unless they are educated in the way we have been educated here today. That is the comment that I would like to make.

NIC MADGE Communication is really important. In fairness to the Minister, there was a good contribution from her in the Daily Mirror last week.

DANNI ADAMS I am from Blades Down. Is there a plan to encourage schools to take an active role in educating our young people about the safer choices of everyday tools, like the safer knife options to help them build awareness and positive habits? Is that something that we can work with the Department of Education on to implement into the curriculum?

LEISA NICHOLS-DREW I definitely think we need to work with the Department of Education. It is part of the safeguarding measures in lots of different institutions. So, whether that is schools in the educational classes, whether it is in community centres, community groups, even working with the

Ministry of Justice, thinking about prison institutions and people's access to knives. We, as a group, really recognise the importance of safeguarding and minimising harm.

GRAHAM FARRELL Someone mentioned earlier about schools and the possibility of introducing rounded knives into home economics, cooking classes and things like that. I think schools are a great example of that, where it can occur. But I think Government should also use its purchasing power for all government related entities or public entities that use knives. We could do that much more easily with a bit of push from government. Prisons are an obvious one. They have been discussed before. All centres with public funding should be using safer knives. That is at least a start, a move in the right direction.

*the possibility of introducing
rounded knives into school
cooking classes*

DUNCAN BEW The charity, which I chair and of which I am a trustee, Growing Against Violence, does teach just that in schools and particularly the primary schools leading into secondary schools where we know there have been difficulties in that transition: and, most importantly, teaching parents as well as the designated

safeguarding leads and supporting the teachers in that. I know that many other charities that are in that space already have access to the schools and trustees. I think it would be good to be able to communicate some of this to those charities who are already delivering that alongside the other public health messages they are giving because it is a really important message. But I guess we do not all know to what degree the different charities across the country have that on their educational curriculum that they are talking about in the schools. So, it is a very good point that you make because although we know the charities we are involved with are doing that, we do not know what everyone else is doing. To have that incorporated would be really important.

PATRICK GREEN It is a great question, but, and this is probably a negative response, I have been trying to work with the Department of Education. I have talked about doing it for twenty years and have been hitting a brick wall. It is really, really difficult to get anything on the curriculum. There are loads of people here all nodding, people who have worked really, really hard on great programmes. They cannot get them on the curriculum. The hard work that needs to be done is the work that you are doing. The work that we are all doing, and the work going against violence is getting out there, educating, but it is a really hard job getting into the Department of Education and even harder getting it on the curriculum.

DANNI ADAMS You mentioned about putting those rounded tips and the safer knives into schools. How can we actually go about that? Because I faced challenges with that in my own school. I work in a local high school, and when I approached my own high school, after seeing Leanne on the news last year, they were very reluctant to change any knives in their home economics and food technology rooms because they felt it sent a message to the parents in the wider community that our school had a knife problem. I know that it is not an issue, but how do we change that perspective from head teachers and the whole of the senior leadership team to be able to implement those changes? Because I think it just takes one school to make that change and do it publicly for every other school then to follow suit.

NIC MADGE I have no experience of education, but I would say that it is much the same as what we have been talking about in terms of the issue generally. Patrick has been working on it twenty years or more: John, ten years or more. All of us in our different ways. We have sore heads because we

have been banging our heads against walls, but some of the walls are crumbling. It is a matter of persistence.

LEANNE LUCAS I have got a school to convert everything. I went to the local high school on the end of the road where the attack happened. They have changed their knives in the canteen, in the staff room and in the food technology department. They now have a notice on the front of their school that says, "We have taken the pledge". That is because I went in and spoke to them and I had that relationship with them. I am more than happy to speak to anyone in the Department of Education or any trusts or any head teachers' meetings, anything like that. For some reason when it comes from somebody's mouth that has seen it happen that helps. And I am a teacher and I have been in the classroom as well. I think that somehow sways certain people into thinking, "Well, let's give this a go". I had children in that class that live on the street where the attack happened, and they participated and said things like that. They think that it is a great thing, moving the community forward. They feel like they are playing a part. So, if I can help in any way on that by delivering my message personally, I am more than happy to do that.

LEANNE REYNOLDS I am from Bin The Blade. Four years ago, I campaigned for knife surrender bins in Bristol in communities, and they work. We have had many hundreds of knives handed in and firearms, but my concern is there is no support around it. I have sat with the Crime Commissioner, the police, and I think bins should be taken back by community charities. I do not think it should have "POLICE" all over the bin. I think we should also potentially be funded to run some kind of mentoring and support scheme that goes with it. It is alright handing a knife in, but they will just go and buy another one. There needs to be some kind of follow up with this.

GRAHAM FARRELL I just wanted to go back to schools. I think you start with Leanne speaking to the Department of Education, so that there is a gentle recommendation that provides an umbrella, an excuse for schools to introduce safer knives. When they do that, they will fall like dominoes, once they are allowed to say "this was recommended to us".

*we should be talking about
harm, not just crime ...
language is so important*

DUNCAN BEW When we are speaking, we should be talking about harm rather than just crime. I think the language is so important, as you alluded to with all these things because there is an overlap between health and safety as well as safeguarding with these things. We need to find a way of destigmatising it by using the right language

and making it generally acceptable. No one is going to argue about the fact that they do not want their children to come to harm from an accidental injury using a knife in a home economics lesson. There are overlaps with all these things that we need to get right in terminology.

NIC MADGE That is a crucially important point. This is about harm. It is not just about crime.

PATRICK GREEN Can I just answer Leanne to what you say about there being more to this than just putting a knife in a bin. I hear you and I agree with you about resources around young people making that decision and encouraging them to make that decision. I think we touched on this with the Minister and with the Young Futures Programme. I am putting a lot of weight on that. I am hoping I am not going to be disappointed, but we need resourcing for organisations that are on the front line. Often, they are running on a shoestring. Often, they are completely dependent on the individuals who are doing it. But recognition of that is a hugely important step. It is not just putting the knife in the bin,

but going on then to, to being mentored and supported to live a positive life. I hear what you are saying and I agree the disposal bin, is important, but it is equally important, if not more important, to give the young person that support.

CHRIS OLEWICZ I am from De Montfort University, but before I worked for De Montfort University, I worked in Parliament. I can tell you two things about Parliament. One, making a small piece of progress can feel like a real achievement, but I understand that there currently is not a knife crime APPG. It has been in abeyance since the last election. I cannot think of a better group of people than the people on the podium now to be the secretariat for that. I suggest that an APPG is something you consider.

The second thing is that Parliament is a profoundly conservative place in terms of reforming itself. The renovation of the building is one example of that. But it is a fact that over one and a half million people dine in the Houses of Parliament every year. Perhaps Parliament itself, the Palace of Westminster should become a safer knife environment.

ANDY SLAUGHTER I do not disagree with that. I do not read too much into the fact that there is now no APPG. They are a curious beast. One of the problems with them is that the rules changed and became infinitely more complicated. So, that may have been the impediment. I think there may be a little bit of inertia there, as you say, but I think that one can easily be set up again. It has been effective in the past. Sarah used to chair that.

I do not want to exaggerate progress, but in the two or three years I have been involved, we went to see Minister in the previous government. We went to see Diana Johnson when she was the Minister. There was definitely a sea change there in terms of interest and genuinely wanting to know and to think about and to talk to officials and to take professional advice on that. Then, Diana was moved, but Sarah arrived. She already had the background. Whenever the topic is debated, which it is quite frequently, it is quite common now to find MPs of all parties talking about rounded knives, talking about other solutions in a way, which they did not do five years ago. They would lament the rise in offences. They would blame somebody else for it, which we are very good at doing.

But when will we get to that tipping point? I am not sure. I think that, as Nic says, it is lots and lots of little contributions, or in some cases bigger contributions, from everybody in this room.

I feel a particular obligation because I am the funnel, the creature of the group who has to try to take that into Parliament and get a hearing and make sure the experts are getting direct access to the politicians who matter there. I am reasonably optimistic, but I could not tell you today exactly how and when it is going to happen. I just think that initiatives, like you said, something that will get attention ... The celebrity element is important. The press element is terribly important and getting people on the press, opinion formers in the media as well on side, because as soon as people start thinking about it as a thing that might happen, something that is feasible, then suddenly the scales drop from their eyes and they say, "Well, why aren't we doing that?" Whereas before you do that, they think, "Why is the nanny state coming into my kitchen and telling me what to do?"

I think we have moved a long distance, but we just have not moved far enough.

NIC MADGE Absolutely right. I am not going to mention any names, but one of the things that we have been trying to do is to involve celebrities because the impact when a celebrity says something is a hundred times greater than when one of us says something.

CATHERINE HICKMAN I am from West Midlands Police, I am not a police officer. I work in the communications team and I run a knife crime campaign in conjunction with Pooja and Nikita. I just

wanted to mention a couple of the things that we have been doing for quite a while that have been mentioned here. So, knife bins in particular. We call them knife bins. There are many initiatives that have run nationally over the years that slightly change, amnesty, surrender, et cetera. But we just call them knife bins, like you would go to a recycling bin for something else. We have sixty odd across the West Midlands. They are incredibly well used. In our last emptying report, over a three-month period earlier this year, there were over 1,700 that were removed just in that three-month period. Consistently, we see those kinds of numbers.

Originally, and I am talking probably, twelve or thirteen years ago when we first started to have some in situ, there probably was a little bit of pushback in communities where they felt there was a stigma. We do not get that anymore. We get communities asking for them. In fact, literally this week we were having a meeting about how there aren't any in Birmingham City Centre, because generally they are in more residential areas. The main reason for that is because where we do see pushback now it is from commercial premises that do not want them outside their retail or hotel or whatever it might be and obviously Birmingham City Centre is full of that.

I was really struck by the Minister's commitment to halving knife crime in a decade.

Clearly, we have also got a problem with CCTV cameras covering all the city centre and we do not want them focusing on the bins. So those are our only real issues now. I think for those that are a little bit concerned, stick with it because we definitely are reaping the benefits over time.

Secondly, the other issue that has been mentioned around pushback potentially from schools, around initiatives in schools. I see it quite similar too. We have had some problems around knife arches when we take them into schools. Similarly, a lot of schools do not want them. We have started to notice quite a significant difference in that. Traditionally, the pushback came from academy trusts because it was more about image and perception. That has started to change and we have actually got academy trusts that are actively wanting to work with us.

I do not know, but I am hopeful that we would follow a similar pattern around the conversation about round headed knives because I think we are starting to see that change.

As a parent of a child that is about to go to secondary school, I can say that having gone into some of these schools as part of open evenings, they have been very proactive in having those conversations. I have listened to the other parents and actually they see it as a reassurance, not as something that they are alarmed by. So, I would like to think that there is a slight change in culture potentially, and that people are seeing it as a reassurance as opposed to something alarmist.

JENNY OKLIKAH I run an organisation called Steel Warriors, and we get knives that have taken been taken off the streets. We create outdoor gyms with them and work with young people and communities. My background is that I worked in Government. I left the Home Office ten years ago, and prior to that I led national policy on gang and youth violence. So, a lot of this is very familiar for me. I think that part of this is around how we change, how we support young people better. I was really struck by the Minister's commitment to that target of halving knife crime in a decade. But I also heard her say in response to the question about youth work and youth workers that we need to improve the economy. We know that it is going to be a tough road.

There are some fantastic organisations in this room and we are very happy to support Leanne and others.

I just wonder whether with yourselves there is more that can be done to bring organisations together so that we in this room can work in partnership more closely and really help support those young people. We know what they are facing and the fear and the normalisation of these issues in their lives. I would love to work closely with people in this room to half knife crime and more in ten years.

I do believe violence is not inevitable. I take that public health approach. It is what drives me. We can change this.

NIC MADGE Thank you. We as a group want to see this conference as a springboard. Immediately after this conference, the seven of us will meet to discuss how we take matters forward. I have no doubt that bringing organisations together will be part of that.

TASH ALEXANDER I run a charity called Head Held High. You are meeting me after working in this field for twelve years. We run interactive motivational workshops for young people at risk of exclusion or affiliation with youth violence or knife crime. I have never ever been on a salary. It is hitting me this year how tough it is for me to keep this going. We have been running the most amazing programme with the Ben Kinsella Trust for the last seven years. It is a six-week programme, called The Best You. Every school in London wants us. I had a school in Southwark say, "I've got a hundred teenagers to send you". I work with ten and then it takes me ten months to try to find 5K to go back in and do it. I have an hour with David Lammy tomorrow. I have a surgery with Catherine West. The following Friday I have a fundraiser. You are getting me when I am knackered. I also write comedy and I can be funny, but not right now. I have written a comedy about this called Coach that I am pitching to the BBC because when Adolescence came out, I went, "Well, if he can do it. I can do it".

My motivation is to wake up our young people. We have so many young, angry hurt people who are transferring that emotion onto other people. Our unique selling point is that we are interactive. I finished a group yesterday. I've been with them one and a half hours a week for six weeks in a school in North London, Alexandra Park School. I said to this young man, "You hated me on the first day." He said, "Yeah, I did." I said, "Now?" He said, "No, I love you. I get it. I get why you do this." We get them up on their feet from the minute they walk in. "Isn't it interesting? You can give me eye contact when you want to intimidate me, but if I say, Stand up. Talk about your favourite pizza for one minute and give people eye contact." They can't do it. "How many of you are angry in this room? How many of you know what your favourite subject is at school?" "Nah. I dunno." "Okay, but if I said, your mum is a yeah." "I'm gonna punch you in the face, Tash." And that is what happened yesterday. He did not punch me. No one has punched me yet, thank God. But, we are getting them to put a mirror to their face and asking them the question, "Can you do better? What action do you need to take?" I had a young man who has grown up with his nan, who has been very violent, very destructive at school. I saw it in my group in that moment. I said, "Do you think you are angry about the situation at home and the fact that you're being brought up by your nan?" I saw completely opposite child and he was shaking. He said, "Yeah". I said, "Do you think if we deal with that and try and find you a therapist or find you the right support that you might start doing better at school because we care?" And he said, "Yeah."

This work is frontline work and I know I am damn good at it. I know I have always wanted to train coaches to go out there. I remember advertising. I had about fifty coaches from all over the UK. I could not get the funding. I had no work to offer them. We have schools all over the place saying, "Tash, we need you." I am literally going to stand on stage on Tuesday and say, "I need someone to

pay me 50K.” It would be the first time I have a salary to sit down and try and develop Head Held High because when you work like this, if you get that 5K, you can go out and deliver it. I do not know when the next penny is coming in. I am now at a point where I cannot pay my rent in three months. I am not asking you to feel sorry for me, but I am assuming most people in this room are on a salary.

I met Elianne Andam’s mother, I think it was this year at your event? Yeah. I am a single mother of a 24-year-old young man. Every time a parent loses a child, I lie in bed and I’m imagining being that parent. Yeah. We go in these workshops and we say, we are all going to die one day. These children are going. They are innocent lives. We have a lot of young people who are very angry and upset. When you get them on your own, that is when you get the truth. I do this work because I am so freaking passionate about it, but I am at the point where I may have to throw in the towel by the end of this year because we cannot go on like this.

I need a team of people. I need to train them how I coach and it is such a damn shame that the people doing the frontline work are scrambling around and you apply for the funds you apply to VRU, to Youth Endowment. I am not putting you down. It is great that you are out there, but you are being oversubscribed. So, we are getting rejection after rejection. Nobody in this room would choose to live like this. I am not angry at anyone in this room. I am just exhausted, So, if you have any ideas please tash@headheldhigh.org.uk. I do not think Patrick has ever seen me relaxed. We have a fundraiser at the Comedy Store, £30, amazing lineup Tuesday. If anyone knows David Lammy and you want to put in a good word, please email him tonight because he is meeting me tomorrow. Keep up the good work.

This has been completely eye-opening. I just really want change. What I want to say is there are so many young people in school who are resorting to violence as a first option. If we get in there, we can prevent them going down this route. [Applause]

SASS BARTER Home Office. I am here with my Home Office colleagues as well. Firstly, Tash, it is very hard to follow that. I just wanted to say to you, to Leanne, to Pooja, thank you all so much for standing up here today and talking to us. I know you probably have fatigue from saying these things over and over again. As we are representing the Home Office, I just wanted to say we are listening. While we cannot make change overnight, we, in the Offensive Weapons Policy Unit, are trying. We work with the Halving Knife Crime unit. We are working with Brendan and Mr. Clayman on their good work as well. We have been listening. Thank you for having us today. We will be feeding back to Minister Jones. We will do what we can. I want to reassure you that we are hearing you.

NIC MADGE Thank you. Can you say, is there a good way for people to contact your unit?

SASS BARTER Yes, we would be happy to leave our contact details for sure. If anyone would like it. I am going to hang around afterwards, so come and find me.

PHIL DIX I am from the Joe Dix Foundation. With regards knife bins, you have said that in the West Midlands you have got sixty-five bins. Who pays for them? Because our local area they does not want anything to do with them. So, as a charity, we are paying for them ourselves.

CATHERINE HICKMAN Our bins are funded by a mixture of the police force, the Police and Crime Commissioner and our violence reduction partnership.

EMMA DIX Joe Dix Foundation. I feel like in Norfolk we are just so backward. We have had lots of conversations with Brendan about this, the knife bins. but we do not have a VRU and it feels like nothing comes down our way to be able to do anything. So as a charity, we are like Tash fighting for these pots of money and we have not got a single knife bin in Norfolk. Not a single bin compared to

the rest of the country. That is disgusting. We have sourced bins ourselves, we have paid for them ourselves through the charity and we are now trying to get places to locate them, all on the back of the fact that the police did not want them because it puts the wrong perception in the area. I think a lot of what is going on here is almost like a postcode lottery. I feel like some areas are at much more of a disadvantage than other areas for everything.

NIC MADGE Can I suggest that you have a word with Caley? Caley may have a way into the police in your area.

DUNCAN BEW The map I showed earlier includes the trauma networks. The trauma networks almost crisscross across some of the Violence Reduction networks and your network is Cambridge, because your patients feed into Addenbrookes. Also, a lot of the air ambulances - they are all charitable: there is no NHS funded air ambulance - are also very interested in integration with prevention. As well, quite often, they have very organised charitable, financial structures, because they have to be able to run their helicopters. I have got some contacts up in Norfolk, colleagues who used to work at Kings who are now based up there as trauma surgeons. I could link you together with them. But again, just don't forget, there are lots of other cross links within healthcare, other organisations that are also really interested in this space and interested in joining together to collaborate for exactly these kind of things.

LEISA NICHOLS-DREW I live in East Anglia, so I will engage with you and support you with this venture as well. Living in a rural community, I totally understand the region and so if I can help, we can all pull together.

LAKS MANN I work at the Youth Endowment Fund. I am change lead for policing. I know a lot of people in the room are probably quite familiar with the Youth Endowment Fund, but I just wanted to flag a few things that we do have as resources. I put out some flyers on the table. It is the toolkit that we have. We are a what works centre. Everything is evidence-based and we put things out on the toolkit as to whether it is a good intervention in terms of high scoring, medium, low or if the evidence just is not there. Also, we do say if something is harmful. So, everything is evidence-based and what we advocate for is to prevent young people getting involved in violence. It is to stop them doing something that is harmful, deprioritise something if the evidence is not clear either way, and focus your money and resources and activities on the best bets that are proven evidence-based to make change happen. So, just a plug there for the toolkit.

The other thing I would say is we also run the Children and Youth Violence Survey. It is the biggest survey of young people's voices every year. This year will be the third year. It is over 10,000 young people. It is anonymous. The results will be coming out next week. We have secured a partnership with ITN. They will be doing deep dives on the survey results and it will all be coming out next week in a series of interviews.

GRAHAM FARRELL Thank you everyone for coming today. There have been some fantastic talks and I have learned a lot: and some particularly passionate talks. The one that stood out for me in particular was the panel that John led with Kate and Will talking about knives. I noted that we do not have retailers involved, but I also noticed the willingness to recognise that we need a working group to move forward talking about legislation in this area. I noticed that we have colleagues from the Home Office here who have been working on this for a long time and have coordinated a lot of information in that position.

I think we need to see all of us sitting in a room developing a proper plan to move this forward, because we have seen lots of ideas. We need to sort it all out properly.

ANDY SLAUGHTER I am very encouraged by what I have heard and by the number of people here, the breadth of experience and the knowledge that you all bring and the fact that I am hearing very unified voices and a degree of commitment, which must be difficult for people who have been doing it for ten or twenty years, thinking, well, who out there is listening?

I do think there is a sea change in Government in that you have got their attention and that they want to solve these problems. They have set themselves a very ambitious target and they are now looking for people like you to help them achieve their target. That is one thing that concentrates politicians' minds because there will be lots of people who say, not after ten years, but after two years or three years, "How are you getting on?" So, I will do what I can. I will continue to act as that bridge as much as I can.

I do believe that the ministerial team are committed on this. I believe that once that door is open a bit wider, it can happen quite quickly.

LEISA NICHOLS-DREW I think today has shown the power of everyone coming together. We are all from different experiences, different professions and I feel that this is the springboard to future events.

Please go and share learnings from today with your networks because that is how change happens: having those conversations, telling people about our message. I am hoping this will have a chain reaction.

JOHN CRICHTON I think collaboration is the word that has encapsulated the discussion, respectful collaboration, and looking for ways forward. I was very struck by the session with Will and Kate, the need for some way of formally discriminating between safer designs and other designs.

The other thing that struck me is how we need to have inter-departmental buy-in. The Home Office cannot do it all by themselves. We have heard about Education, Health as well. I think that there are a number of different government departments who need to get their act together. We should not just put our emails through to the Home Office.

DUNCAN BEW It is a real privilege to sit up here and have everybody together, talking in a unified language, with a common purpose, particularly for all of those who have had personal experience and lived experience of losing loved ones. It is such a brave thing that you do, stepping forwards like this to speak up.

Quite often solutions to these problems are coveted by people and they are not shared. People want to keep them as their own, partly because there are such difficult problems with ongoing funding. The thing we alluded to around keeping a consistent and sustainable delivery at a community level, amidst the different cycles of political change is very, very difficult.

I think that there is an opportunity here for all of us to try to maintain that in a very real way that makes things deliverable, but also something that we can really articulate to all the chargeable, statutory partners and to get behind because all of these are very, very complex problems and the solutions are very complex.

There is a common link here, which is the lethality of the weapon that is involved and that we are discussing. If we can remove that, or at least the availability of it, in many cases, both intentional or accidental, we will be able to do save some lives. That would make a huge difference.

PATRICK GREEN I want to thank all the knife crime organisations who came along today, for being involved and for sharing your voice and being so enthusiastic about the event.

I will take away the point about getting us all involved in this go going forward.

I am going to be a little bit cheeky, because this is Sceptre week, and the next Sceptre, which is taking place in May, we are looking to run alongside Knife Crime Awareness Week. We would love to talk to you all about getting involved in that as well. Lisa, who runs Knife Awareness Week is here. So, we will be in touch. But thank you for being such an active part of this conference.

LEANNE LUCAS I wanted to thank everyone for today. I think the power comes through from experts linking with the lived experience. I really think that is such a powerful message. You are getting the data, the statistics, the experiences from the police, forensic science, all these types of things. Then you get the emotion and the passion, where it affects real life. I think that is something that we have got to remember when we do things like this. This is real life. This is everyone who is involved in a charity, a trust, a campaign. You are in it for a reason, aren't you? It is a personal reason and it means something. I think today for me is a step forward. People are listening and people want to collaborate. People want to come together. I think we should just celebrate that power and not let it fade away after today.

*the power comes from experts
linking with lived experience ...
that is such a powerful message*

I think sometimes we come to things and we have a great idea or we take a business card off somebody, but it is following through that is sometimes difficult. Maybe some of us in the charitable sector should make our own working group. Sometimes the coalitions and things

are too big. You can get lost in them. So, maybe if some of us have similar things we are working on, for example, Danni at Blades Down, if you want to do something with schools or something like that, maybe we should collaborate a little bit more on a lower scale and get some working groups together there.

NIC MADGE Thank you Leanne. I agree with all of that.

Thank all of you. This conference would have been nothing without all of you. Thank you all for coming.

Echoing what everyone has said, I really do hope that we can work together to remove the lethality of the weapons that are kitchen knives. I really hope that this has not been simply another talk shop. I do not think it has. I hope that we can use this as a springboard to move forward.

We, members of the Safer Knife Group, will be talking about how we go forward immediately after this conference ends. Also, so that we do not lose all the positive thoughts, all the positive things that have been said today, we will be sharing with everyone an edited transcript of the conference.

Thank you all so much.

