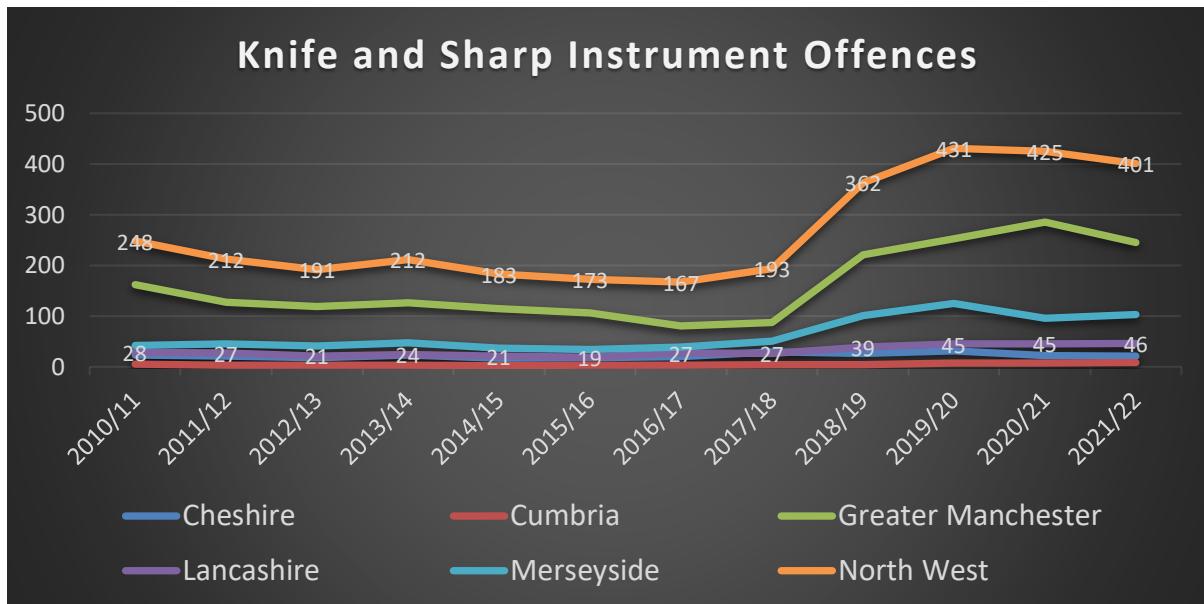


## Knife Crime Awareness V1 05.03.2023

It is widely reported that knife crime offences are becoming more and more common.

To help illustrate this, below is a chart of our local area, taken from the Office of National Statistics. You can see that there has been a steady increase since 2017/18.



### Knife figures from table P6 year on year total

The Office of National Statistics have advised that recordings of crimes involving knives and sharp instruments are at the highest they have been since records began.

- Twenty-four children aged just 17 or younger were murdered with a knife or sharp object in 2019. This represents the highest number of children murdered in over 10 years.
- There were 46,950 Police recorded offences involving a knife or sharp instrument in the 12 months to September 2021.

*When we talk about knife crime, what do we mean?* Knife crime covers:-

- Using a knife to cause harm to another person (stabbing or cutting someone)
- Committing a crime using a knife (robbery at knife point)
- Committing a crime pretending you have a knife
- Threatening someone with a knife
- Carrying a knife

Not all crimes using knives are the same. Overall, almost half of the crimes committed using a knife were stabbings, around 43% were robberies and approximately 46% of the crimes committed were assault rape or sexual assault.

## **Why has there been an increase?**

Although there has been no proven direct link to the increase in knife crime, there are increasing suspicions that cuts to Policing is one of the principal reasons. Since 2010, Police numbers have decreased by around 20,000.

In fact, Cressida Dick believed that there was a link between falling Police numbers and a rise in violent crime.

Research by academics has led to identifying other underlying causes. A significant proportion of knife crime takes place in neighbourhoods suffering from social disadvantage and lack of investment, indicating that there is a strong link between violent crime and environments created by austerity.

Spending on youth services in England and Wales has been cut by 70% in real terms in less than a decade, which means that there is zero funding in some areas according to research. In real terms this means the loss of 750 youth centres and more than 4500 youth workers.

Youth services are seen by those working in the sector as vital in the fight against knife crime.

It is also important to recognise that young people often cite the reason for starting to carry a weapon to avoid becoming a victim. In some instances, gangs make their drug carriers carry a knife to protect the merchandise.

- Statistically, if you carry a knife, you are more likely to be killed.

The need to protect themselves is heightened because they feel they are not protected by the Police. Young people who live in high crime neighbourhoods or those already involved in crime may not see the Police as being willing to protect them.

There is often distrust towards the Police especially among minority communities due to institutional racism and past experience of abuse.

Even those who trust the Police may see them as inefficient and ineffective. As violent crime has risen, fewer offenders have been identified and sentenced. Often it can be months and sometimes years before anything is done. Violent retaliation therefore is seen as an effective means of justice.

Stop and search policies used by the Police may be an effective means of reducing the number of weapons on the street however Black people are 9.7 times more likely than White to be stopped.

Social media can glamourise and normalise carrying weapons; young people post videos of themselves with knives, this is known as drill music.

Why do people carry knives or sharp instruments?

- To protect themselves or other gang members
- To protect merchandise they are carrying/holding on to
- Intimidation of others
- Showing off
- To feel powerful
- To gain respect

Knife crime has the potential to affect anyone from any background. Some less affluent or deprived areas are more likely to be affected, as are Black men and boys who are 25% more likely to be affected.

Knife crime is more prevalent in large cities like London which has the highest level of knife crime in the country.

Why are Black men and boys disproportionately affected as both victims and perpetrators?

- Subjected to racism and discrimination of different forms and levels throughout life so far
- Having friends or family who carry knives
- Having previous experience around crime
- Having a difficult home life
- Being exposed to misconceptions about knife crime
- Being fearful of being attacked
- Having low self-esteem
- Being disengaged from education or work
- Not knowing the consequences of carrying a knife

The consequences of being involved in knife crime can be severe. You are more likely to be hurt if you carry a knife. You are more likely to be targeted and more likely to use a knife in a confrontation. You are also more likely to be hurt by your own weapon (by yourself or another). Depending where on the body a knife is used a wound can be minor, life changing or fatal.

- The legal consequences for possession of a knife can be up to four years in prison. If a knife is used and someone dies the sentence can be up to 25 years.

You can also be charged with murder if you are at a place where someone is killed, even if you weren't carrying the weapon. Just filming or photographing a fight will mean you get the same sentence as others involved under Joint Enterprise.

Another aspect you may not have considered is your ability to find work or travel to certain countries.

The purpose of any discussions around knife crime is to identify myths and misconceptions and to ensure all young people understand the risks and find other ways to make themselves feel safe.

It is important to listen to young people when they talk about the subject. By showing that you respect their point of view, they are more likely to engage with what you say. Young people face a number of pressures, which as adults we may be unaware of. Finding out why a young person carries or feels they should carry a knife can help lead to a solution.

The discussions also allow a young person time and space to reflect on their decisions and behaviours. It is important for them to understand they have a choice.

You should be aware of safeguarding procedures within your organisation. Concerns about the use of any sort of weapon in relation to anyone up to the age of 18 is a serious safeguarding issue.

### **Resources for young people and their families**

Mind 0300 123 3393 (Monday to Friday 09:00 to 18:00)

Samaritans 116 123 (Open 24/7)

Young Minds Parents helpline 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday 09:30 to 16:00)

Young Minds Crisis messenger TEXT YM to 85258 (open 24/7)

Kooth.com Emotional and mental health support ages 11-24

Childline 0800 1111 (Everyday 07:30 to 03:30)

Ben Kinsella Trust

Panorama Olly's story: a social media murder