

Using community impact statements for knife crime

Statements that highlight the wider impact of knife crime on local communities and can be used as evidence to support prosecutions.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Knife and gun crime Community engagement Criminal justice
Organisation	Metropolitan Police Service
Contact	Rob Ranstead
Email address	robert.ranstead@met.police.uk
Region	London
Partners	Police Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services)
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Communities Offenders Victims

Aim

- to highlight the impact of knife crime in local communities
- to reduce the number of no further action (NFA) files for knife crime
- to maximise positive criminal justice outcomes for knife crime offences

Intended outcome

- a reduction in the number of NFA files for knife crime offences
- increased understanding around the public and community impact of knife crime
- increased trust and confidence in the police

Description

Community impact statements are written to support the evidential test for charging in knife crime cases. They aim to remind prosecution decision makers of the impact that knife crime has on wider communities.

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has developed and used 12 knife crime community impact statements. The statements are written by basic command unit (BCU) commanders or their deputies. They are updated every 12 to 18 months to ensure they reflect the most up-to-date knife crime statistics and current community feelings. The statements are posted on the force intranet for investigators to use.

The statements vary in length depending on the BCU but are usually around two pages. They typically include:

- the views of local stakeholders such as schools and neighbourhood officers
- statistics surrounding knife crime in the local area
- evidence on the links between knife crime and other crimes (for example, illegal drugs, youth violence and gang culture)

Once written by the BCU commander, the statements are quality assured by the chief inspector with responsibility for the statements before being posted on the force intranet.

Knife crime community impact statements require minimal budget or resource to set up or operationalise. The only requirement is a dedicated lead to drive the statements forward, provide direction and guidance to those writing the statements, and lead on their publication and marketing on the force intranet.

Overall impact

Statements have now been taken from all BCUs in the MPS.

The initiative was also shared in the College of Policing's Going equipped – see [Tackling knife crime with local communities](#).

Early analysis suggested that the original BCUs using knife crime community impact statements had an increase in positive outcomes for charges made for knife crime offences. There appeared to be an increase in positive outcomes by up to 9% when comparing prosecutions from BCUs that had these statements to those that did not during the phased introduction. However, this analysis was not able to consider other influencing factors.

The impact statements remind prosecutors of the broader impact that knife crime has on communities. The statements also highlight to prosecutors the level of importance placed on tackling knife crime by MPS senior leadership teams.

Over the past 12 months these statements have continued to be updated to reflect changes in local leadership. This practice has had an impact of around a 9% increase in positive outcomes in comparison to prosecution files which did not have this impact statement added. This is asymmetric as it's often challenging to compare one prosecution directly with another.

Learning

- the statements do not require a big budget or many resources, the key to success in the MPS has been keeping them updated and encouraging their use
- statements may need to be checked after writing to ensure suitability and also for key information such as spelling, dates and signatures
- early engagement with investigators is crucial to ensuring they are considered as part of the evidence
- internal marketing is needed to ensure these statements are used by investigators, this marketing may include placing posters in custody and providing links on internal blogs
- there requirement for reviews to take place beyond an annual basis to ensure the statements are updated when personnel change
- it is essential to involve the internal communications team to encourage officers and staff to utilise community impact statements

Best available evidence

Currently the [crime reduction toolkit](#) does not include any best-available evidence on using community impact statements to support knife crime prosecutions.

See [Knife crime – a problem solving guide](#) for practical and evidence-informed advice on how to reduce local knife crime.

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Tags

Knife crime