

TACKLING KNIFE CRIME

**A Review of Literature on
Knife Crime in the UK**

**A report for the Royal Armouries Museum
December 2007**

ROYAL ARMOURIES



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*A report for the Royal Armouries Museum
by Perpetuity Research & Consultancy International (PRCI) Ltd*

December 2007

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Section 1. Introduction

- 1.1 As the Home Office's web page on knife crime best practice guidelines says: 'Knife-enabled crime continues to cause serious harm to victims and creates fear in our communities'. Following a number of high profile crimes¹ involving knives in the UK, the topic has received a lot of attention from the popular mass media. However the true scale of the problem is unknown due to the lack of precise information currently collected. Indeed former Home Secretary John Reid acknowledged the gaps when he committed police forces to collecting statistics on the use of knives in crime from April 2007. Until this time 'knife-enabled crime' (KEC) was not recorded separately by the police because it fell within other offence categories.
- 1.2 Despite the lack of systematic collection of statistics on KEC, there are a number of sources of data available which provide an approximate indication of the extent of knife crime and knife carrying in the UK, such as the British Crime Survey (BCS), Youth Surveys and hospital admissions data relating to stabbing injuries.
- 1.3 The 2006/07 BCS for example estimated that weapons were used in 24 per cent of all violent crimes in England and Wales; and furthermore knives were the most commonly used weapon reported as being used in seven per cent of violent incidents.² According to police recorded crime data the most common method of killing during 2004/05 was with a sharp instrument; 29 per cent of homicide victims were killed by this method.

Defining knife crime

- 1.4 Despite extensive reference to 'knife crime' in the mass media and increasingly in political discourse, there is often no qualification as to what the term is actually being used to describe. Knife crime can be used to describe a variety of different offences, varying in severity from carrying a knife for protection in a public place to producing a knife as a weapon during the course of a robbery or sexual assault for example.
- 1.5 This research, supported by the views of key commentators on the subject, demonstrates the pressing need to unpack the discourse that has grown around 'knife crime' and categorise it into constituent offences (such as possession offences, using a knife in a threatening

¹ For example, some recent cases include the fatal stabbing of Adam Regis aged 15 in March 2007, Neil Hampson aged 37 in November 2007 and Kiyon Prince aged 15 in May 2006. There are numerous other high profile cases of knife crime fatalities reported in the mass media in the past two years. However, it is claimed that it is only relatively few fatalities involving a knife are reported in the media (<http://www.knifecrimes.org/crime-figures.html>).

² Nicholas, S., Kershaw, C. & Walker, A. (2007), 'Crime in England and Wales 2006/07,' *Home Office Statistical Bulletin* (4th Edition). Available at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs07/hosb1107.pdf>

manner, using a knife to inflict an injury etc.) and promote a culture whereby the term is qualified by what is actually being referred to. It is only by breaking it down that we can begin to understand the nature and extent of knife crime in the UK.

- 1.6 The lack of reliable statistics and information coupled with the definitional issues on 'knife crime' have been perpetuated by the mass media and sensationalist, inaccurate and misrepresented information is not uncommon.
- 1.7 The Royal Armouries commissioned Perpetuity to explore the current research regarding knife crime in the UK with a view to identifying its reliability, usefulness and methodological rigour. It is also important to identify any gaps in this research that need to be filled in order to obtain a comprehensive and up to date understanding of knife crime.
- 1.8 Section Two presents the current data and statistics on knives such as those emanating from the British Crime Survey, the Police and the Home Office. The section reveals a startling lack of reliable data on KEC. A discussion will be provided that seeks to elucidate the usefulness of the statistics in understanding knife crime in the UK. The section will go on to examine what other reliable statistics are available on knife crime such as hospital admissions data.
- 1.9 Section Three presents a systematic review of the literature. It provides an outline of the most relevant and methodologically sound research that is currently available on UK knife crime. Criteria have been devised to filter out poor quality research, or that which is no longer relevant. The section will also consider the extent to which there is overlap, duplication, contradiction and inconsistency between the studies.
- 1.10 Section Four provides a discussion on the lack of credible and reliable research on knives. It explores the motivations that underlie the commissioning of research as well as exploring the possibility and need for a central resource library for knife related research. The section goes on to explore the role of the media in relation to knife crime. It outlines how inaccurate and sensationalist reporting of knife crime in the UK can serve to fan the flames of public alarm and panic. It will also consider the important role that the media can (and has) played in placing knife crime high on the political agenda.

Section 2. Knife Crime: Data and Statistics

2.1 This section will provide a brief overview of the main sources of data which collect information in relation to knives/ knife crime and sharp/ stabbing instruments, firstly exploring those which are produced by the Home Office and Police notifiable offences. The type of information collected by each of the sources and some of their key findings will also be summarised.

2.2 Obtaining reliable statistics on the true level of crime is often fraught with difficulties. As one criminologist has summarised:

Seeking a definitive figure for crime levels is akin to asking how many headaches there are, or how many beetles. Though in principle, and given perfect knowledge, the question is answerable, in practice no definitive answer is possible.³

2.3 Indeed, as we will see, estimates of the prevalence of knife-related offences are not exempt from 'guesstimates', incomplete recorded data and a reliance upon the extrapolation of survey findings. This, not surprisingly, results in unreliable and often contradictory data.

2.4 This section will present the 'official measures' of knife-related use and offences. The findings, advantages and limitations of the data sources will be presented.

Official Measures

2.5 The following section outlines the official measures of crime and explores their reporting of knife-related trends and offences. It covers the British Crime Survey (BCS), police recorded crime and hospital admissions data.

The British Crime Survey

2.6 The BCS is a victimisation survey which began in 1982; and moved to an annual cycle from 2001/02. It measures the amount of crime in England and Wales by asking adults aged 16 and over living in private households about crimes they have experienced in the previous twelve months. It also provides information about public perceptions of anti-

³ Gardside, R (2004) Crime, Persistent Offenders and the Justice Gap. London: Crime and Society Foundation. P.10.

social behaviour, fear of crime and attitudes towards the Criminal Justice System. The survey has a core sample of approximately 40,000 participants.

- 2.7 It is argued that the BCS can provide a better reflection of the extent of household and personal crime because it includes crimes that are not reported to the police and crimes which are not recorded by them.⁴
- 2.8 The most recent BCS in 2006/07 collected the following types of information in relation to knives/ knife crime:
- The use of a knife in all violent crimes⁵
 - The use of a knife in each of the following BCS offence categories: wounding, robbery, assault with minor injury and assault with no injury
 - The use of a knife in each of the following BCS typology categories:
 - Acquaintance violence – this includes wounding, robbery, assault with minor injury and assault with no injury in those cases in which the victim knew one or more of the offenders, at least by sight. This does not include domestic violence.
 - Domestic violence – this includes wounding, assault with minor injury and assault with no injury which involve victims' partners, ex-partners, household members or other relatives.
 - Mugging – this includes robbery, attempted robbery and snatch theft from the person
 - Stranger violence – this includes assaults with minor injury, assaults with no injury and wounding in those cases in which the victim did not know any of the offenders in any way.
- 2.9 The 2006/07 BCS estimated that weapons were used in 24 per cent of all violent crimes in England and Wales. A knife was the most common type of weapon used in violent incidents representing seven per cent of all BCS incidents of violence, followed by hitting implements (6%), and glass or bottles (5%). The use of different types of weapons has remained similar between 2005/06 and 2006/07 BCS.⁶
- 2.10 For all types of violent incident where knives were used, they were most common in robberies with twenty per cent of robberies involving a knife, followed by 16 per cent of muggings.⁷

⁴ It is estimated that around 40 per cent of all BCS crime is reported to the police although this varies for individual offence types (Nicholas et al (2007); Above cite).

⁵ BCS violent crimes include wounding, robbery, assault with minor injury and assault with no injury.

⁶ Nicholas et al (2007); Above cite.

⁷ They also constituted 7 per cent of acquaintance violence, 7 per cent of woundings, 7 per cent of assault with no injury, 5 per cent domestic violent incident, 5 per cent of stranger violent incidents and 2 per cent of assaults with minor injuries.

Limitations of the BCS data

- 2.11 The BCS does not aim to provide a total count of crime, but rather to provide a robust and consistent estimate of trends in crime over time. However, there are some important limitations to its usefulness. Importantly, it does not include those aged under 16 (it is considered inappropriate to survey child victims of crime in a general household survey). However, consultation with a representative from the Home Office has indicated that the next BCS will be improved to include a sample of 10-16 year olds.
- 2.12 The BCS is also limited in terms of sample sizes, which are very small in relation to knife offences and as such need to be treated with caution. One commentator felt that if the government were serious about trying to address the issue there would need to be victim surveys undertaken looking at the use of weapons in all violent crimes.
- 2.13 The BCS is also limited as it omits business crimes or the victims of homicide (since it is a self victimisation survey they cannot be interviewed) and those who are homeless or living in institutions. In terms of knife crime these omissions may well serve to cloud the true extent of knife crime in the UK.

Police Recorded Crime

- 2.14 Police recorded crime statistics can provide a good measure of trends in well-reported crimes and can be used for local crime pattern analysis. Recorded crime provides the only measure of homicide and also the only reliable measure of crimes such as robbery. Unlike the BCS, recorded crime also includes crimes committed against businesses and against those under the age of 16 which should make it an important source in understanding knife crime.

Limitations of the police recorded data

- 2.15 However, an accurate picture of whether knife crime is actually increasing or decreasing is hard to gauge because KEC was not separately identified in the Annual Data Requirement before April 2007. Instead, incidents were recorded by police on the basis of the charge, such as murder, wounding or grievous bodily harm. Therefore, it is currently not possible to identify offences involving the use of weapons other than firearms from national police recorded crime statistics. The limitations of the police recorded data on KEC is therefore self evident. However, the following section will outline exactly what is currently available.

- 2.16 The 'Violent Crime Overview, Homicide and Gun Crime 2004/05' does provide some insight into the possible level of KEC. According to police recorded data the most common method of killing during 2004/05 was with a sharp instrument; 29 per cent of homicide victims were killed by this method. However the proportion of homicides committed using a sharp instrument has declined from 37 per cent in 1995 to 29 per cent in 2004/05.⁸
- 2.17 Although prior to April 2007 knife crime was not required to be recorded by individual police forces, it is apparent that some forces have recorded such crimes for their own intelligence and analytical purposes.⁹ Within the scope of this study we found that a number of forces currently collect and monitor data on knife-enabled crime for their own problem solving purpose.
- 2.18 The Metropolitan Police Service collects comprehensive data on knife-enabled crime and a detailed breakdown is provided to local authorities on a monthly basis. The data can be broken down by borough, month, crime type (e.g. robbery, violent crime), victim, offender and location. The data has been available since at least 2005/06. However there is some evidence to suggest it has been available since 2003/04.
- 2.19 Northamptonshire Police also records details of knife crimes committed within their beats. They provide analysis to demonstrate hot spot areas for knife crime, peak times for knife crime, the age and gender of victims and perpetrators of knife crime and the motivation for a knife being used. This level of analysis is imperative for the police to understand how to tackle knife crime in different areas of the country.
- 2.20 In a similar vein, it would appear that Northern Ireland is more advanced than other parts of the UK in the collection and subsequent analysis of data on KEC. For example, the Central Statistics Unit provides details on crimes recorded where a knife was involved in the incident.¹⁰ These are broken down into nine different categories (offences against the person, sexual offences, burglary, robbery, theft, fraud and forgery, criminal damage, possession and other notifiable offences).
- 2.21 The length of time that the data has been collected varies across the forces; however it does appear to have existed for several years although it was not necessarily monitored. For example in Humberside the data had been recorded by the police for longer than the two years for which it had been monitored by the performance monitoring

⁸ Coleman, K., Hird, C. & Povey, D. (2006), 'Violent Crime Overview, Homicide and Gun Crime 2004/05,' Home Office Statistical Bulletin. Available at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs06/hosb0206.pdf>

⁹ In order to establish exactly how many forces collected this data and how they categorized it, each individual force would need to be surveyed which is beyond the scope of this report.

¹⁰ Although the recording of knife crime in Northern Ireland does appear to be more advanced than other parts of the UK it does still harbour limitations. For example, the figures relate to crimes where a knife was involved in the incident – it is not known how the knife was actually used.

department. It had only started to be monitored when it became a local performance indicator.

- 2.22 The data profiled within individual forces is not openly available to the public; however non-personal data, such as the total number of offences, can be requested from each force under the Freedom of Information Act. This would provide case by case data for independent analysis.
- 2.23 It was stressed during the telephone interviews with key commentators that there has only been a limited steer nationally on how to record knife crime or what to measure. ACPO and the Home Office have released best practice guidance, however there are as yet no nationally set criteria for recording knife crime which means that data collection will vary from force to force thus making a national extrapolation complex. This will be discussed in greater detail below.
- 2.24 To demonstrate the variability in data collection we will draw on the practice of two separate forces. The Metropolitan Police Service defines KEC as any offence within the categories of violence against the person, sexual offence, robbery or burglary that has been recorded on their crime recording system with a feature code that shows specifically that a knife was used during the commission of the offence. Offences of possession of an offensive weapon are excluded from the main analysis, as are offences where sharp instruments were used. This aligns closely with the PPAF (Policing Performance Assessment Framework) definition of gun enabled crime. In contrast, Humberside Police includes all offences involving a knife regardless of the offence category. This demonstrates the limitations of the existing system and shows that data cannot be compared across forces unless the measure is standardised.
- 2.25 In light of the lack of reliable official statistics on knife related crime, the Home Office announced a new means of producing data on knife crime. Former Home Secretary John Reid told the House of Commons on 19 March 2007 that 'data on serious violent offences involving the specific use of knives and sharp objects will be separately collected so that we can provide a more detailed understanding of the prevalence of the problem'¹¹. UK police forces are now identifying knife crimes which result in GBH, and in the following offence categories: attempted murder, wounding with intent to do GBH, wounding or inflicting GBH, robbery of a business property and robbery of personal property.¹²
- 2.26 Although 'Knife Crime Best Practice Guidelines' have been published jointly by ACPO and the Home Office¹³ there does not appear to be

11 Oral Answers to Questions — Home Department
Knife Crime, House of Commons Debates (19th march 2007). Available at:
<http://www.theyworkforyou.com/debates/?id=2007-03-19b.568.2>

12 ACPO/ Home Office Knife Crime Best Practice Guidelines (2007). Available at:
<http://www.crimereduction.homeoffice.gov.uk/violence/violence023.pdf>

13 Ibid.

any national counting rules on recording knife crime which means that there is huge scope for variations in recording practices across forces. Indeed, the guidelines were actually published in June 2007, two months after police forces commenced collecting the data. Subsequently, this means that the data will be unable (or at least not reliably) trended nationally.

- 2.27 Commentators during the interview process saw this as a major flaw. Whilst there was recognition that there was a need for a bedding-in period to review the quality of data being collected and make amendments accordingly, some were uncertain that the aim of a national standardised process was clear.
- 2.28 The fact that the new system only records 'serious or violent' offences will also present a very incomplete picture regarding the true extent of different types of knife crime. The Guidelines state that 'ACPO continue to discuss with the Home Office the possibility to extend this data collection to cover all offences'¹⁴ and through consultation with Home Office representatives as part of this study there does appear to be an ongoing debate over data collection related to knife crime.
- 2.29 No decisions have been taken as yet but it would appear that the collection of data starting from April 2007 is viewed as a stop gap measure. From April 2009 all recorded crime data will be collected in a different way, in a Data Hub that taps into forces' MIS electronically and will enable the capture of data in far greater detail on recorded crime. This is likely to include weapon used and demographic data including the age etc. of both victims and perpetrators. Currently data is only recorded in aggregate form – the Data Hub will change this.
- 2.30 The figures for serious wounding involving knives and other sharp instruments from 2007/08 onwards will be presented by the Home Office once they have been collated and analyzed. However, consultation with a representative from the Home Office revealed that this may be a number of years away, as there is the possibility that they will wait until the data can be trended over number of years before publication.
- 2.31 On 28 October 2007 the Mail on Sunday and Sunday Telegraph published figures, requested by journalists under the Freedom of Information Act, on KEC that had been collected since April 2007. They obtained data for 37 out of the 43 forces in England and Wales. The remaining six, mostly smaller forces, said they were unable to provide data¹⁵.
- 2.32 The study showed that the police recorded a total 5,023 serious knife crimes in England and Wales in the first three months after they began

¹⁴ Ibid. P. 5.

¹⁵ The overview of these findings are available at:
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2007/10/28/nknife128.xml>

to count the offences as a separate crime category in April. This is equivalent to about 400 offences per week. Forces with the highest rate of offence per 1000 population were (in descending order)¹⁶:

- Metropolitan
- Greater Manchester
- Bedfordshire
- West Midlands
- Northumbria
- West Yorkshire
- Merseyside
- Derbyshire
- Humberside
- South Yorkshire

2.33 The Home Office has insisted that a concerted effort is being made to tackle KEC and to remove the number of knives being carried illegally on the street. It is noteworthy that, as one Home Office minister has warned, a concerted effort would inevitably result in an *increase* in the crime figures involving a knife. It is important that if this is the case then it is handled sensitively so as not to spark panic amongst the public about a potential knife crime epidemic. As Home Office Minister, Vernon Coaker states:

*If we want the police to clamp down on knife crime and the possession of these weapons in a public place without lawful reason those possession and crime figures will go up. ...[If] that means getting on top of knives on the streets that is a good thing, because in the short term it means that tough police action will result in the crime rate going up.*¹⁷

2.34 This view was supported by a number of police commentators interviewed during this study. The issue was identified by Northamptonshire Police who recognise the importance of managing the media portrayal of knife crime so that police activity does not exacerbate the problem. Similarly, following on from a newspaper headline that read 'Knife crime soars by 50% in four years' published in the Scotsman, a spokesman for Lothian and Borders Police stated 'Scottish police have prioritised searching the general public for knives, above just about everything else. The 50% rise is the result of the police being more proactive'.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Taken from the minutes of the Select Committee on Home Affairs (27 MARCH 2007). Available at: <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmhaff/433/7032702.htm#n1>

¹⁸ Knife Crime (August 2006). Produced by Northamptonshire Police. Solution Profile, issue No.1.

- 2.35 It is clear that the Home Office is deciding what data needs to be collected at a national level (with input from organisations such as ACPO) although without clear counting rules to govern this data collection it can only be of limited use. There will be a myriad of issues pertaining to the accuracy of this data, particularly when it is attempted to present a UK national picture as there are no overarching rules to ensure consistency.
- 2.36 There is evidence to suggest that individual police forces do collect and analyse figures on KEC within their area, particularly where this is related to their own key performance indicators and targets.

The Hospital Episode Statistics Online

- 2.37 Other than the Home Office and police statistics there are hospital data that can support the analysis of knife-related injuries, thereby giving an insight into the prevalence of knife crime. The Hospital Episode Statistics Online (HES Online) presents data relating to 'assault by sharp object' collected in NHS hospitals in England. Clearly this will include more than just knife crime. Data exists from 1998/99 to 2005/06 but care needs to be taken when comparing figures for different years. Fluctuations can occur for a number of reasons, such as organisational changes, the adoption of new coding schemes and data quality problems. Indeed it is highly probable that an increase is likely to reflect better recording rather than increased prevalence. Data users need to fully explore the issues before drawing out any conclusions about the reasons for year-on-year changes.¹⁹ The HES stress that the database is based on records from over 500 separate NHS trusts. Although the HES work closely with the trusts to maintain data quality and consistency there are bound to be errors.
- 2.38 The data includes the percentage of episodes for males, the percentage that were admitted as an emergency and the percentage that were from a waiting list. The mean and median duration of the stay is provided, in days, as well as the mean age. Age is also presented as a percentage for the following age ranges: 0 -14, 15 – 59, 60 – 74 and 75 plus. The data is available case by case by age, gender, postcode district, ethnicity and date of admission among other variables.
- 2.39 Some preliminary analysis of the HES has been conducted. For example, one study analyses the trends in admissions to hospital involving an assault using a knife or other sharp instrument between

¹⁹ The presentation of the HES data needs to be fully understood before any analysis takes place to avoid the reporting of inaccurate figures. For example, the data includes the number of finished episodes and the number of admissions. HES records refer to episodes (periods) of continuous patient care under the same consultant, where responsibility for a patient's care is transferred to another consultant there will be two (or more) HES records for that patient. Therefore the total for finished episodes is higher than that for admissions.

1997 and 2005.²⁰ It was found that in the eight years between 1st April 1997 and 31st March 2005 the number of people admitted to hospital reportedly following an assault involving a sharp object rose by 30 per cent, from 3770 patients in 1997/8 to 4891 in 2004/5. One hundred and fifty-four of these people died (0.5 per cent). Males accounted for 90 per cent (males 30 464 and females 3406) of admissions. Forty-nine percent (14 786) of the men, and 41 per cent (1383) of the women, had injuries to the head, neck or thorax. Interestingly, forty-two percent (14,220) of admissions were on a Saturday or Sunday perhaps indicating a link between knife crime and the night time economy.²¹ The study concludes that the number of recorded hospital admissions from stabbing assaults increased between 1997 and 2005, and approximately 13 people a day are currently admitted to hospital for treatment after being stabbed.

2.40 Medical related research has also been conducted to test the hypothesis that weapon-related violence (excluding firearms) results in more severe injury relative to the use of body parts (fists, feet and other body parts), and to rank order of injury severity by assault mechanism (although this research is now somewhat outdated).²² The study incorporated findings from 24660 patients who were treated in a UK emergency department for violence-related injury. The research showed that the use of feet resulted in greatest severity of injury. In contrast with previous findings, the use of blunt objects, rather than sharp objects, was the next most likely to result in severe injury. The finding that sharp objects are less likely to result in severe injury than feet, blunt objects or other body parts is interesting, as sharp objects are the most often used objects of homicide in England and Wales. The authors state that these findings may reflect a failure of the data to discriminate between, for example, knives, which can be used to inflict severe penetrating trauma and other sharp objects, for example, broken glasses and bottles—the use of which may result in comparatively superficial wounds.

2.41 Although studies of injury severity according to weapon type are sparse, another study in the UK²³ showed that patients who were kicked or injured with a sharp object were more likely to be admitted to hospital (an indication of greater injury severity). Elsewhere in Europe, it has been reported that almost twice as many Danish patients were treated in emergency departments after penetrating trauma (10.3%)

²⁰ Maxwell, R. et al (2007) 'Trends in admissions to hospital involving an assault using a knife or other sharp instrument, England, 1997–2005' In *Journal of Public Health* 29(2) pp.186-190.

²¹ Caution needs to be taken when interpreting these figures as they include stabbing with 'other sharp implement'. This could include broken bottles or glasses particularly in association with the night time economy.

²² Brennan, I. Moore, S. and Sheppard, J. Non-firearm weapon use and injury severity: priorities for prevention in British Medical Journal. Available at: http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/dentistry/research/phacr/violence/pdfs/BMS_InjPrev.pdf.

²³ Shepherd, J P. et al. (1990) 'Pattern, severity and aetiology of injuries in victims of assault'. In: *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*. Volume 83, Issue 2. PP. 75–78. Available at: <http://www.jrsm.org/cgi/content/abstract/83/2/75>

than blunt trauma (5.5%) indicating the severity of injury using sharp implements²⁴.

Hospital Case Study Data

2.42 Individual hospitals have conducted their own audits in order to establish the nature and frequency of knife related injuries. For example, one hospital in East London audited forensic knife injuries to establish the size of the problem in what they considered to be a representative urban area²⁵. Data on forensic knife injuries (excluding deliberate self harm) was extracted from a detailed database of all trauma calls from July 2004 to June 2006. It was found that overall there were 309 forensic knife injuries; 259 patients were admitted, 184 were operated on, and eight died. The chest was the most common area injured (183 out of 309 patients, and the most likely to result in death, accounting for 6 out of 8 deaths). Most patients were men (297/309), and the mean age was 28 (range 15-74).

2.43 In order to provide a measure of changing incidence over a longer time of a greater range of severity of injury, the study also audited all cases coded as "stabbing" on the patient administration system during the ten year period from July 1997 to June 2006. The study reports that over both periods, the data show an increase in the overall incidence of stabbings. Furthermore, it was discovered that there was an increased need for surgical intervention in the prospective study which may reflect increasing severity of injury. The authors conclude that the data therefore seem to support the general perception that knife injuries are increasing.

Limitations of HES data

2.44 The HES clearly provides some useful data on the current trends in knife related injuries. However, as with all data its quality and reliability relies upon those who input it. There is scope for misinterpretation in inputting the data. For example, a nurse presented with a gash to a hand may not regard this as a 'stabbing' and therefore not record it as such. The data is also reliant to a large degree on the patient disclosing how they came to be injured. Due to the likelihood of police involvement if they state that they were stabbed, it is likely that reluctant victims may not disclose the true nature of the incident. Other victims simply avoid attending a hospital or GP for treatment. There is also the ongoing issue that incidents involving knives are often amalgamated with those involving a sharp instrument. This could be

²⁴ Brink O., Vesterby, A., and Jensen, J. (1998) 'Patterns of injuries due to interpersonal violence'. In: Injury. Volume 29, Number 9. PP. 705-9.

²⁵ Konig, T. and Knowles, C H. (2006) 'Stabbing: data support public perception'. In: British Medical Journal. Available at: <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/333/7569/652>

anything from a shard of broken glass from a window pane, a smashed bottle or a screw driver. The assimilation of knife injuries with injuries sustained by other sharp instruments severely limits the understanding we can gain on knife crime. For the reasons outlined above, it is likely that the HES figures under-represent the true extent of knife injuries in England. However, without further scrutiny of the statistics it is difficult to ascertain the true level.

- 2.45 Commentators during the interview process were also keen to explore how data could be captured from other sources including Youth Offending Teams, Weapons Awareness Providers, schools and colleges, voluntary and statutory providers of youth services etc. The starting point might be an audit of available sources and collection techniques.
- 2.46 The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) is calling for a national register of assaults where weapons are involved in schools. The idea has received the support of the TUC and is part of the NASUWT wider drive to support schools in recording data on incidents better.

Summary

- 2.47 In summary, we can see from the above outline that there is a startling lack of reliable data on knife crime. The BCS does provide some indication of the current level of knife crime but it does have some very important limitations. Most notably it excludes some groups that are likely to suffer relatively high levels of victimisation i.e. the homeless and those under the age of sixteen from the survey. However, that said, it does provide some indication of the level of KEC to use as a consistent benchmark which is more than can be said for the police recorded statistics. There is a huge gap in understanding as a result of the lack of information provided by police forces. Even with the onset of the collection of serious incident data involving knives, without consistency on how to collect this data it will be of very limited use. This is clearly an opportune time to ensure that those tasked with tackling the knife 'culture' in the UK are provided with the most reliable and complete figures possible in order to target initiatives where they are most needed.

Section 3. A Systematic Review

- 3.1 This section seeks to identify and critique the existing literature in knife crime in the UK. Whereas the previous chapter focused upon the data and statistics collected on knife crime, the systematic review considers all types of research such as evaluations, policy, prevalence audits etc. In doing so, it becomes quickly apparent that research focusing explicitly on knife crime is severely lacking, and research adhering to rigorous methodological standards even more so.
- 3.2 In order to identify the most useful and relevant research studies conducted in the UK a systematic review was conducted.²⁶ Criteria were devised with the purpose of weeding out research that failed to meet the minimum levels of reliability and validity.²⁷ However, due to the lack of research on the subject of knives in the UK some of those that did not fulfil one of the criteria are still outlined due to their strength in other credentials. For example, 'Fear and Fashion' does not have a scientifically obtained representative sample, nor does it make the methodology on which the empirical evidence is based satisfactorily transparent. However, it is included as a literature review as it provides some insights and a useful overview of initiatives aimed at tackling the carrying and using of knives. The reasons for which a particular study did not fulfil the criteria are explicitly outlined along with the associated shortcomings the project has as a result.

Criteria for inclusion

- 3.3 The criterion for inclusion in the research review is outlined below:
- **Focus:** Knife crime should be the focus of the research. Due to a lack of research that focuses explicitly on knives, it should be identifiable as one of the main topics of research. Research on knife crime is often combined with that on guns and other weaponry, gangs and youth offending. The determination of these criteria is based upon the author(s) identifying it as such, or if the author did not do this, it being clearly apparent from the research aims and objectives that knives were a key aspect of the research.

²⁶ Full details of what a systematic review comprises can be found in the methodology section.

- **Recent:** Research often becomes out of date very quickly. As such only research that has been published in the last five years will be considered. The cut off point for publication is August 2002.
- **Generalisability:** This criterion considers the sample size and how representative the sample can be considered to be. Generalisability does not need to extend to all encompassing populations but some level of extrapolation beyond the research sample is a prerequisite for inclusion. This criterion will not be relevant to all research as some research projects may not contain primary data.
- **Geography:** Only research focusing upon knife crime in the UK will be considered. The cultural differences between different countries presents problems for applying research findings transnationally. However, comparative studies i.e. comparing the UK to France for example, will be considered since they still provide insight into UK trends.
- **Ideologically neutral:** It is important that research is unbiased and value neutral. Although research is not afforded immunity from the influence of political agendas, where this is explicitly identifiable the research study will be discounted.

The relevant research studies

3.4 The research studies that meet the criteria will be outlined below (in no particular order). This will include a review of the aims and objectives of the study, the methodology, the sample size, and the findings. Table 1 provides the details of the available research on knives conducted in the UK and its adherence to the criteria outlined above.

Table 1: All available research involving knives in the UK

Study	Approach	Focus on Knives	Recent	Generalisable	UK	Ideologically Neutral
MORI Youth Survey 2004	Survey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Young people and crime: Findings from the 2005 OCJS Survey	Survey	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fear and Fashion: The use of knives and other weapons by young people	Literature review (with some primary data)	✓	✓	n/a ²⁸	✓	✓
Knife crime: Ineffective reactions to a distracting problem?	Literature review	✓	✓	n/a	✓	✓

²⁸ The primary data is discounted in this research as it is neither representative nor transparent. As such this research is included as a literature review as it does provide some useful insights into the carrying and use of knives as well as initiatives implemented to tackle them.

MORI Youth Survey (YJB)

Publication Date:	Annual 1999-2004
Author:	Market and Opinion Research International (MORI)
Commissioner:	Youth Justice Board (YJB)
Method:	Self-completion survey
Sample Size:	Varied – approximately 5000.
Sample:	Mainstream and excluded pupils (aged 11 to 18)

Background

- 3.5 MORI conducted Youth Surveys annually for the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales (YJB) between 1999 and 2004, producing six reports in total, as well as a report summarising data from five years of surveys.²⁹

Aims and Objectives

- 3.6 The overall aim of the research has been to examine the experience of crime by both offenders and victims, among 11–16-year-old young people in mainstream education and those who have been excluded.

Methodology

- 3.7 The research takes the form of a self-completion survey. Two separate studies are conducted; one with pupils in mainstream education and one with excluded pupils. The survey aims to explore the prevalence of offending among young people, gauges any links between truancy and offending, investigates alcohol and drug taking behaviour, assesses young people's ethics and fears and measures the proportion who have been victims of crime.

Summary of Findings

- 3.8 The most recent survey in 2004 was completed by 4715 pupils (aged 11-16) across 192 schools, and 687 young people (aged 11-17) who

²⁹ Phillips, A. and Chamberlain, V. (2006) MORI Five-Year Report: An analysis of Youth Survey Data. Available at: <http://www.yjb.gov.uk/Publications/Scripts/prodView.asp?idproduct=288&eP=>

had been excluded from mainstream education. The following section will briefly report on the findings from this survey, and where possible compare this to the findings of the previous surveys.

- 3.9 The most recent survey reported that 51 per cent of excluded young people admitted to 'carrying a knife' in the past twelve months, down from 62 per cent the previous year.³⁰ This is compared with thirty per cent who are in mainstream education.
- 3.10 A new question was asked in the 2004 Youth Survey that was not asked in previous MORI surveys to establish whether young people have ever possessed and used a potentially dangerous weapon. The findings demonstrate that the most common (potential) weapon carried, at least once in the last year was a penknife. It was discovered that 25 per cent of young people in mainstream school claim to have carried a penknife and 46 per cent of excluded pupils claim to have carried a penknife in the past year.
- 3.11 In addition, substantial numbers of excluded young people claimed to have carried a flick knife (30 per cent), an air gun (20 per cent) or a kitchen knife (16 per cent). It is important to bear in mind that young people who carry these weapons might have been under adult guidance at the time. What is more, the majority say that they have never used a weapon, even if they have carried one.
- 3.12 However, it may be that weapons are carried symbolically, for protection and are not used proactively. It is clear that the majority of young people that do admit to carrying a weapon have never used it. Perhaps a cause for concern is that the survey found that nearly half of excluded young people (47 per cent) admit to have carried a weapon³¹, but say they never used it, while 24 per cent have never carried a weapon. In comparison 62 per cent of young people in mainstream education have never carried a weapon, and 21 per cent who say they have carried a weapon have never used it.
- 3.13 The survey found that boys were far more likely to carry a knife rather than girls (40 per cent compared with 15 per cent respectively). This gender difference was also apparent amongst excluded pupils although not to the same extent (55 per cent versus 37 per cent of girls).
- 3.14 Looking at findings by region, it was discovered that those in the North East were more likely to carry a knife (46%, compared with 30% nationally).

³⁰ The frequency of what constitutes 'carrying a knife' is not made explicit in this question and so young people who carry a knife every day would be categorised with those who may carry a knife once a year. In a similar vein those who used to carry a knife but currently don't would not necessarily be picked up on.

³¹ Again, there is ambiguity in what constitutes 'carrying a weapon'. It is not clear if this is asking the young people to state if they have ever carried a weapon in their life time for any duration, or whether it is asking if they currently carry a weapon.

- 3.15 There were found to be significant differences according to ethnicity amongst the sample of young people in mainstream schools only. It was reported that white pupils are more likely to say that they have carried a penknife than young people from black or minority ethnic groups (26 per cent compared with 20 per cent). On the other hand, young people who are black are more likely to claim to have carried a flick knife than white or Asian young people (15 per cent compared with 9 per cent and 8 per cent respectively).
- 3.16 Overall the MORI survey reported that three in ten young people in mainstream schools (28 per cent) have carried any kind of knife in the last year, as have almost three in five excluded young people (57 per cent). However, it should be noted that a large proportion of the knives being carried by young people in both samples are penknives, which can be, of course, used for a wide variety of innocent purposes and are not illegal so long as their folding blade is no longer than three inches³².
- 3.17 Finally, the data for both groups also indicate that young people who have been victims of an offence are more likely to carry a knife, than those who have not been a victim. Over a third (36 per cent) of young people in mainstream education who have been a victim carry a knife, compared with 18 per cent of those who have not been a victim of crime. Similarly, 62 per cent of young people who have been excluded who have been victims of crime carry a knife, compared with 51 per cent who have not been a victim. This finding would support the view that knives are carried by young people in the belief that they might use it for protection.

Limitations

- 3.18 The MORI Youth Survey provides some very useful data to gauge the nature and extent of knife carrying among the UK's youth. The survey has a good sample size and the fact that it was repeated over six years provides very useful data that can be trended. However, there are a number of shortfalls with the data. There are a whole host of difficulties associated with self-completion questionnaires such as accuracy, the participant not understanding the question, individual interpretation, and although participants are assured of anonymity and confidentiality some may still be cautious about 'confessing' to certain crimes. Conversely, the young people are also asked about victimisation of crime and as such they may be too embarrassed, ashamed or upset to reveal any incidents in which they were the victim.

³² Knives where the blade folds into the handle, like a Swiss Army knife, are legal to carry, generally, as long as the blade is no longer than three inches (7.62cm), and is not lockable. This is not the case in specified places, nor if the knife is carried 'with intent'.

- 3.19 Over time, some questions have been altered and therefore cannot be trended, particularly the list of offences which young people may commit. Although it is important that new questions are added as they emerge as important issues, unfortunately it means that the findings can only be interpreted in a vacuum as there is no point of reference for the first year.
- 3.20 The age of the survey participants has remained consistent amongst young people participating in the MORI Schools Omnibus (i.e. aged 11 to 16 years). However, this has altered for the survey of excluded pupils. In 2000, the survey was conducted amongst young people aged 14 to 18 years. This was subsequently changed in 2001, 2002 and 2003 to 11 to 16 year olds to provide greater comparability with the MORI Schools Omnibus survey. In 2004, the survey of excluded pupils includes participants aged 11 to 17 and so some caution needs to be exacted when comparing the two data sets.

Young People and Crime: Findings from the 2005 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey

Publication Date:	December 2006
Author/s:	Wilson, Sharp & Patterson (Home Office Research Development and Statistics)
Commissioner:	Home Office
Method:	Self-completion survey
Sample Size:	Varied (approximately 5000)
Sample:	Young people (aged 10-25) living in general household population in England and Wales

Background

- 3.21 The Offending, Crime and Justice Survey (OCJS) is a national longitudinal, self-report offending survey for England and Wales that was conducted annually between 2003 and 2006. The most recent survey was published in December 2006, but the findings relate to the survey that was conducted in 2005 and as such the findings are somewhat out of date.

Aims and Objectives

- 3.22 The main aim of the survey is to examine the extent of offending, anti-social behaviour and drug use among the household population, particularly among young people aged from 10 to 25. The survey

covers offences against households, individuals and businesses. In addition to 'mainstream' offences such as burglary, shoplifting and assault, it also covers fraud and technology offences. However, the survey does not include young people living in institutions, including prisons, or the homeless, and thus omits some high offending groups.

Methodology

3.23 The research takes the form of a self-completion survey. The 2005 OCJS sample consisted of respondents who had previously been interviewed in 2003, 2004 or both, as well as a fresh sample of 10 to 25 year olds. Eighty-four per cent of those first interviewed in 2003 and 82 per cent from those first interviewed in 2004 were interviewed in 2005 giving a total sample of 4,421 people (4,164 were aged from 10 to 25 at the time of the 2005 interview). A total of 816 new respondents aged from 10 to 25 were added to give an overall sample size of 4,980 aged from 10 to 25. The results from the survey were weighted to be nationally representative.

Summary of Findings

3.24 The survey found that overall, four per cent of young people had carried a knife in the last twelve months. In comparison, less than one per cent reported having carried a gun in the same time period. The survey rather usefully breaks the question regarding the carrying of a knife down into the frequency with which it is carried. It was found that fifty per cent of those who admitted to having carried a knife in the previous twelve months stated that this was 'once or twice', 23 per cent stated that this was 'three or four times', eleven per cent claimed they carried a knife 'between 5 and 10 times' and sixteen per cent claimed it was '10 times or more'.

3.25 Similar to the MORI Youth Survey 2004, males were more likely than females to have carried a knife (5 per cent versus 2 per cent). Of the four per cent that had carried a knife, eighty-five per cent claimed the reason for doing so was for protection and nine per cent said it was in case they got into a fight (perhaps a similar motivation to protection). The peak age for both knife and gun carrying was 16 to 17.

3.26 The report states that carrying a knife may not be linked to any criminal intent. The 2005 OCJS asked, for the first time, more details about carrying knives. These included the usual type of knife they carried, the main reason for carrying knives, whether it has been used to threaten someone and whether it has been used to injure someone. It was reported that of the four per cent that carried a knife, four in ten (41 per cent) had carried a pen knife, 29 per cent had carried a flick knife and one in ten (10 per cent) had carried a kitchen knife. These findings reflect similar results to the MORI Youth Survey 2004 outlined above

which found that of those who had carried a knife or gun most had carried a pen knife.

- 3.27 In terms of using knives, less than one in ten (7 per cent) of those who had carried a knife in the last 12 months had used it to threaten someone. Two per cent had used the knife to injure someone. Due to the small base numbers the survey was unable to break these results down further by age and sex.
- 3.28 The overall the proportion of young people carrying a knife in the 2005 wave had decreased from the 2004 wave (4 per cent) to the 2005 wave (3 per cent). Interestingly the MORI Youth Survey 2004 had also reported a decrease in reported knife carrying from its previous year. The decrease in the OCJS was true for both males and those aged from 18 to 25 years (7 per cent to 4 per cent for males, and from 5 per cent to 2 per cent for 18 to 25 year olds).

Limitations

- 3.29 As with all surveys, the OCJS suffers from the same limitations and potential problems as the MORI Youth Survey 2004. The survey data may present inaccurate information due to the participant not understanding the question, their individual interpretation, and although participants are assured of anonymity and confidentiality some may still be cautious about 'confessing' to certain crimes.
- 3.30 The fact that data has been weighted to be nationally representative may be subject to a sampling error. This means that the results may differ from those that would be obtained if the entire population of 10 to 25 year olds participated in the survey. Indeed, the OCJS (2004)³³ reports that 0.32 per cent of those surveyed had been 'knifed or stabbed'. The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies have extrapolated this figure and applied it to all young people aged 10 to 25 to say that the number of victims in that twelve month period could be anywhere between 22,142 and 57,900.
- 3.31 The survey does not include young people living in institutions, including YOIs and prisons, or the homeless, and thus it omits some high offending groups therefore giving an obscured view of the nature and extent of knife carrying and use.

³³ Budd, T. et al. (November 2005) Young People and Crime: Findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey. Available at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs05/hosb2005.pdf>

Lemos & Crane (2004) Fear and fashion: The use of knives and other weapons by young people³⁴.

Publication Date:	2004
Author/s:	Lemos, Gerard
Commissioner:	Bridge House Trust
Method:	Literature review, E-Survey & stakeholder Consultation
Sample Size:	Undisclosed
Sample:	Undisclosed numbers. Includes schools, community and voluntary groups working with young people in London. Corporation of London stakeholders and practitioners.

Background

3.32 The research project was commissioned by Bridge House Trust. The motivation of Bridge House Trust in commissioning study was to establish clearer evidence about the use of knives and weapons by young people and to identify approaches currently being taken to deal with the problem. In light of the findings the Trust felt the information would help them to target its resources more effectively, and provide the voluntary and community sector practitioners with information that may help them when working with young people.

Aims and Objectives

3.33 The main aims and objectives presented themselves as a series of questions outlined by the commissioners. They were keen to establish 'harder evidence' about:

- the extent to which knives and weapons are carried and used by young people
- the causes of increased carrying and using of knives
- the range of knives and other weapons used
- the locations where knives and weapons are used by young people
- the types of young people that carry or use knives and other weapons

³⁴ Lemos, G. (2004) Fear and Fashion: The Use of Knives and other weapons by young people. Published by Lemos & Crane. On 22 November 2007 a Fear and Fashion conference was held, outlining recent work and setting out the plan for developing the project in 2008.

- whether it is males or females who carry and use knives, or both
- approaches currently being taken to deal with the problem

Methodology

3.34 The methodology is not presented within the final report in any great detail. The report simply outlines that it ‘draws upon an extensive literature review, an e-survey of schools and community and voluntary groups working with young people in London and discussions and meetings with Corporation of London stakeholders and invited practitioners from across London’.³⁵ However, no indication of how many schools were surveyed, how many individuals completed the survey and what their role was, nor how many stakeholders were consulted with, etc is presented in the report. Consultation with the author could not illuminate any further details regarding the methodology other than to say that it should not be considered ‘scientific’ nor ‘representative’. It is acceptable that qualitative research studies are not representative or scientific, indeed they do not strive to be, however it is standard good practice that methodologies are as transparent as possible.

3.35 As such this research has been included as a literature review. Where any findings from primary data are presented their utility must be tempered by the fact that they are unreliable and not generalisable.

Summary of Findings

3.36 The ‘Fear and Fashion’ report is divided into three main sections. Part one ‘Extent and Causes’ outlines the available research on the extent and causes of young people carrying knives and other weapons. This is mainly based on survey data emanating from the MORI Youth Survey (outlined above) and the Communities that Care national survey.³⁶ This is coupled with consultation with practitioners regarding their views on why young people carry and use weapons. The report outlines findings from surveys such as the gender and age of young people who carry offensive weapons. It also provides a typology of young people who carry knives and other offensive weapons based on stakeholder consultation. This divides young people who carry knives into four groups as presented below:

- Group A. Young people who have offended and are in the criminal justice system.
- Group B. Associates of offenders - those in group A - who have not been identified by the criminal justice system (and are

³⁵ Ibid. P. vii.

³⁶ Beinart et al (2002) Youth at Risk? A national survey of risk factors, protective factors and problem behaviour among young people in England, Scotland and Wales. Communities that Care: London.

therefore not being worked with by youth offending teams or probation).

- Group C. Young people who carry weapons a lot of the time and are known to youth, education and criminal agencies.
- Group D. Young people who carry weapons on an ad hoc basis when they feel there are known risks, but without the knowledge of any agencies.

3.37 The report continues to elucidate the reasons for young people carrying weapons. It considers factors such as the increasing violence that young people are subjected to via the media (television, 'video nasties', computer games etc.), parental control and school attendance which "may have cumulative and reinforcing effects"³⁷. Fear is presented as a central motivator and causal factor for carrying a knife although the author qualifies this by stating that:

*No national study has yet investigated the existence of a causal link between fear and the decision of young people to carry a knife, but the media has pointed to fear as an important motive.*³⁸

3.38 Part Two of the report 'approaches' provides an overview of a number of initiatives that have been implemented to tackle the carrying of knives and their use amongst young people. It is useful in providing an overview of some of the initiatives that are taking place although they do not provide the depth of information required to replicate the initiatives. However, some of the website addresses are provided for interested parties to pursue further details.

3.39 Part Three of the report outlines a summary of findings and some initial recommendations based on the literature review and the consultation. The report identifies the key priorities for local programmes to tackle knife carrying and knife crime in hotspot areas, such as developing good practice materials to be used in schools, youth clubs and by Youth Offending Teams (YOTS) and the Police. However, it is reported that there were at the time of print very few examples of good practice to draw upon.

Limitations

3.40 Although the research is useful in providing an outline of initiatives aimed at tackling knife carrying and use, the utility of the primary data in this project is hindered by the lack of a comprehensive methodology. It is very difficult to assess its usefulness without a clear methodology.

3.41 The report provides a useful summary of previous research and literature although at times it does rely too heavily on newspaper

³⁷ Ibid. pg.8.

³⁸ Ibid. pg.9.

reporting on the nature and extent of knife crime. This simply perpetuates the use of unreliable sources on the subject of knives.

- 3.42 The conclusions gained from the report should be used with caution as they are based on consultation with an unknown number of practitioners whose credentials to inform the report are not indicated as well as secondary data often emanating from the mass media. It is also important to note that the report is focused on young people in London, especially certain inner boroughs. The findings are thus not necessarily applicable outside London, or even to many of the boroughs of London itself.

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (2006). Knife crime: Ineffective reactions to a distracting problem?³⁹

Publication Date:	2006
Author/s:	The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (CCJS)
Commissioner:	N/A
Method:	Literature review.
Sample Size:	N/A – Secondary sources only
Sample:	N/A – Secondary sources only

Background

- 3.43 The motivation for the report lies in the fact that there is a lack of high quality and reliable research that has been conducted on the type, nature and frequency of knife crime in the UK. The research was conducted by the CCJS based at King's College London.

Aims and Objectives

- 3.44 The central objective of the report is to pull together the existing information and research on knife carrying and knife crime (e.g. who is doing committing it, who is suffering it etc). It also aims to explore the current strategies that are employed to reduce the levels of knife carrying and knife use such as knife amnesties, police stop and search, increased prison sentences and education and awareness raising.

³⁹ The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies (2006). *Knife Crime: Ineffective reactions to a distracting problem? A Review of Evidence and Policy*. An updated 2nd edition was published in December 2007 entitled 'Knife Crime' A Review of Evidence and Policy. Available at: http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/opus439/ccjs_knife_report.pdf

Drawing upon the findings, the authors make some 'tentative' assessments of such initiatives.

Methodology

- 3.45 The methodology used in this report is that of a literature review. In essence the authors have gathered together the relevant available research on current knife laws, the carrying of knives, the use of knives in crime, the use of knives to cause injury and the use of knives in homicides.

Summary of Findings

- 3.46 The report is overtly critical of the level of knowledge that is currently held about the nature and frequency of knife carrying and knife use in the UK. It criticises the lack of a universal definition of knife crime and the problems that ensue when different meanings are used by different parties. In a similar vein to this report, the authors identify the importance of unpacking what is meant by the term 'knife crime' when they state:

'Disaggregating the offences which constitute 'knife crime' (e.g. offences in which an individual is stabbed; those in which a knife is used in a threatening manner; those in which a knife happens to be in a person's back pocket et cetera) would provide far greater clarity'.⁴⁰

- 3.47 The report goes on to outline the available data on knives under the following categories: knife carrying, the use of knives in crime, the use of knives to cause injury, and deaths caused by the use of knives using four official measures. These are the BCS, police recorded crime, the OCJS and the MORI Youth Surveys (all of which are outlined in preceding chapters of this report).
- 3.48 The report is overtly critical of the strategies and approaches taken by the Home Office to tackle knife crime. For example, it highlights the lack of research that is conducted on the efficacy of knife amnesties. The authors state that although national knife amnesties are relatively rare, at local authority level they are commonplace. These knife amnesties often result in press releases being translated into positive headlines assuring the public that the removal of knives from the streets is making our 'communities safer'. However, the authors are sceptical of this claim. They state that even the collection of almost

⁴⁰ Ibid. P. 9.

90,000 knives in the May 2006 national amnesty equated at most to just 0.0041 per cent of knives in England and Wales that could be used in a crime. Indeed the authors point out that knives are a household commodity and are easily accessed. Unlike gun amnesties it is simply a case of returning to the kitchen drawer once one knife has been disposed of in an amnesty to obtain another. The authors conclude on the subject of knife amnesties that '*it is, at best, questionable whether this will result in a reduction in knife carrying and knife-related offences*'.⁴¹

- 3.49 The report then turns to consider the increased use of 'stop and search' tactics by the police. Again, the authors are sceptical of the success that such approaches can have in deterring the carrying and use of knives. A Home Office report in 2003 stated that of nearly 19,000 people stopped and searched under Section 60 of the Public Order Act just seven per cent were found to be carrying an offensive instrument and of these just fourteen per cent (203 individuals) were arrested.⁴² Although this may sound like a relatively high figure, the Home Office report concluded that 'considering that the search powers in question should be used only where a specific threat of violence is present, these 'hit rates' are surprisingly low'. It would appear that individuals were being stopped and searched without the required assessment of risk being identified first. In light of this the CCJS draws attention to the fact that it is Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups that are often disproportionately the targets of such stop and search strategies with the potential of stirring up resentment amongst these communities. The authors conclude that the expectation that the police can make large reductions in the number of people carrying and using knives through stop and search techniques alone is '*unrealistic and unreasonable*'.⁴³
- 3.50 The next strategy to be reviewed by the CCJS report is the increased prison sentence for carrying a knife in public from two years to four. At the time the CCJS report was published this was being planned by the Government (it has now been passed). The authors are sceptical of putting the possession of a knife on a par with that of possession of a firearm. They were also critical of the inability of those in charge of sentencing to assess offenders on a case by case basis, stating that it would result in the young first time carrier being issued with same sentence as the mature routine carrier of a knife with previous convictions. The authors of the CCJS again highlight the issue that no research has been conducted to assess the effectiveness of increased prison sentences on offending behaviour. They cite The Halliday Review (2001) which stated there was '*no evidence to show what*

⁴¹ Ibid. P. 27.

⁴² Brookman, F. and Maguire, M. (2003) Reducing Homicide: A Review of the possibilities. PP. 33-34. Home Office Online Report 01/03. Available at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/rdsolr0103.pdf>

⁴³ CCJS. Above Cite. P.29.

levels of punishment produce what levels of general deterrence'.⁴⁴ Importantly, the CCJS state that if it is accepted that the majority of individuals that carry knives fall within the 14 to 21 age bracket the increase in sentence length will result in children and young people being sent to young offender institutes and prison for longer.

- 3.51 The climate in which the sentencing increase was proposed '*smacks of knee-jerk legislative response*' according to the CCJS report. At the time of publication of the CCJS report (August 2006), the Labour Government was coming under heavy criticism following a spate of fatal knife offences. The high profile media attention that these cases received provided ammunition for the opposition to use against the Government and accuse them of not tackling violent crime. The 'knife attack epidemic'⁴⁵ continues today and can arguably be seen as the reason that the Home Office has ordered the police to begin to record 'serious' knife crime.
- 3.52 The final approach to tackling knife crime considered by the CCJS report is education and awareness-raising. They cite the recommendations made by in the Fear and Fashion report to develop programmes and good practice materials to be used by schools, YOTs and the police to tackle knife carrying and use by young people. In a similar vein, a Home Office report that outlines possible strategies to tackle homicide comes to a similar conclusion when it stated the 'most promising' weapons related strategy were 'educational campaigns regarding the dangers and penalties in relation to the illegal carrying of firearms and knives and other weapons'.⁴⁶ However, although the programmes designed to tackle knife carrying and use may be regarded as useful this is largely reliant upon anecdotal evidence. There have been very few evaluations of strategies. One young person based initiative, the 'Be Safe Project', has been evaluated by Newham YOT and claims some very impressive results.⁴⁷ However, in order to establish good practice an audit of all initiatives needs to be conducted followed by a systematic assessment and evaluation by trained evaluators of their effectiveness.
- 3.53 The report concludes by considering the underlying causes of KEC and knife carrying. It requests acknowledgement of the fact that knives are simply one expression of violence and a reduction in the use of carrying of knives can only occur if the root causes of violence is addressed by a long term strategy. In this respect punitive sanctions and reactionary enforcement will not have any long term impact. Although the use of a knife will clearly make a violent incident more lethal, stabbings are not caused simply by the presence of a knife. The

⁴⁴ Halliday, J. et al (2001) Making Punishments Work: Report of a review of the sentencing framework for England and Wales. London: Home Office. P.8.

⁴⁵ 'One man dead, another clings to life in knife attack epidemic' (May 31st 2006) in TimesOnline. Available at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article670054.ece>

⁴⁶ Brookman, F. and Maguire, M. Above cite.

⁴⁷ www.besafeproject.org.uk

CCJS claim that it is the context within which violence takes place that is the key to tackling KEC.

- 3.54 The report provides a very useful summary of the literature and research pertaining to knife carrying and use in the UK. It presents a very strong argument for the need for more research into the perpetrators of knife crime and their motivation as well as independent evaluations of initiatives to tackle it.

Limitations

The CCJS report on knives can only be as good as the literature on which it is based. The lack of comprehensive data and research on knives means that the authors have little choice but to summarise that which is available and make tentative conclusions from it. However, the literature review is a strong piece of work that clearly identifies the gaps in knowledge. As such it is a very useful piece of work for encouraging decision makers to acknowledge the outstanding issues on knife crime and recognise that ill thought out, knee-jerk reactions do little to alleviate the root causes of KEC.

Section 4. Research on Knives and the role of the Media

Reasons for the inaccurate reporting of knife crime

- 4.1 The following section will address the reasons why many reports cite statistics or examples for which they provide little or no authority e.g. the prevalence of stabbings, the number of young people who had their own weapon used against them and the number of people that carry a knife. It will then go on to consider the role of the media with regards to the reporting of knife crime.
- 4.2 The problems are centred on five main areas. These are:
- Lack of credible data
 - No standards governing referencing
 - Manipulating data
 - Making assumptions
 - Appropriation

These are outlined in greater detail below.

- 4.3 Clearly one of the major issues is a lack of research or credible data readily available in the public arena for citation. This lack of data is clearly outlined above. When reports or newspaper articles are written there are very few hard facts to be cited, which means that often unreliable data is used in its place.
- 4.4 Even when the more reliable data has been accessed and used, the source is often not referenced. This is because the majority of reports and articles do not require the level of transparency and reliability that is associated with more academic research. For example, it is extremely rare for a newspaper article to clearly cite the source of any data they use in their articles as it is not required (nor often desired) by their readership.
- 4.5 Often reports will take findings out of context in order to support their own claims, generate interest, or provide sensationalist statements. This manipulation of data and statistics is particularly rife within the media in order to generate sales based on sensationalist reports and headlines.

- 4.6 Assumptions are rife within the reporting on knife crime, even within the more respected publications such as those endorsed by the Home Office. For example, one report in 2003 states “*there is relatively little evidence as to the extent of knife-carrying*”. Despite this acknowledgement it continues “*but there are some indications that it is by no means unusual, especially among young men*”.⁴⁸ This type of presumptive, unqualified statement emanating from a Home Office publication can very quickly be appropriated into the reporting on knife crime. It is easy to see in the current culture of reporting how ‘young men carrying knives is common’ quickly becomes a ‘fact’.
- 4.7 Statements and opinions can often be subjected to a slow process of appropriation whereby they are increasingly used without reference to the source. The opinion becomes ‘common knowledge’ or given as ‘fact’ although there is little evidence to substantiate it. A clear example, of this can be cited with the Home Office tagline ‘turn in your knife before it’s turned on you’ which accompanied the May 2006 knife amnesty. Following this, Home Office minister Vernon Coaker stated:
- Too many people think that carrying a knife will make them safer but the reality is quite the opposite as they run the real risk of having the knife turned back on them.*⁴⁹
- 4.8 This statement is quickly cited as fact and can be found in numerous publications and newspaper stories subsequent to the knife amnesty. One security website states that ‘65 per cent of people who carry knives have their weapons turned against them’ and this is referenced as emanating from the Be Safe Project⁵⁰. However, in consultation with a representative from the Be Safe Project they refuted the statistic and stated that it had been misquoted. In fact, they claimed that the statistic was actually one from US research that claimed that ‘65 per cent of police officers that were shot in America had been shot by their own gun’. The Be Safe representative described the use of the quote as ‘ridiculous’ and claimed that they had requested their name be removed as the source of it. This example clearly illustrates the ease with which statistics are manipulated to suit different organisations and the difficulty in retracting them once they have become established in the public domain.
- 4.9 A number of reports are commissioned in order for a pressure group or charity to gather ‘evidence’ for their claim or preferred action. For example, the Be Safe Project favours educational interventions and has conducted surveys to evidence the need for this approach as well as inviting the YOT to evaluate the initiative. However, this is often to inform their own best course of action. For example, the Bridge House

⁴⁸ Brookman, F. and Maguire, M

⁴⁹ Home Office Press Release available at: <http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/Turn-in-Your-Knife?version=1>

⁵⁰ - <http://www.besafeproject.org.uk/index.html>

Trust in commissioning 'Fear and Fashion' was eager to try and establish what the most effective types of intervention might be.

- 4.10 There have been some claims made that not enough has been done to understand the problems around knife crime, as one report states:

Government and the police lack a coherent, evidence-based, reasoned strategy for dealing with knife carrying and knife-related offences. There is insufficient evidence that a knife amnesty or increasing sentence length for carrying knives will decrease the level of knife use and knife carrying.⁵¹

- 4.11 It is not clear whether the strategies used by the Government to attempt to tackle KEC are actually developed with the primary view of curtailing this behaviour. The more cynical would argue that the strategies taken are actually designed to maximise headlines and publicity so that the government is seen to be doing something to tackle it. Clearly knife amnesties, raised ages limits, bans on weapons like 'samurai swords' and increases in sentence length command headlines and fill column inches – certainly relatively more so than longitudinal approaches to tackle the root causes of violent crime such as redressing poverty and inequality of opportunity.
- 4.12 However, what is exceedingly clear is that without a better evidence base on the nature and extent of the problem as well as a review of interventions and initiatives to tackle knife crime, the Government are literally having a 'stab in the dark' at the best course of action.
- 4.13 There is the ongoing difficulty of presenting the 'clear facts' as these are unavailable. In consulting with a Home Office representative, it is not considered a deliberate ploy to 'hide' the extent of knife crime in the way police incidents were recorded, but rather it was previously deemed unnecessary to record incidents involving knives separately. Clearly there is now that need and steps are being taken to address this. However, it would appear that this is currently being done on an ad hoc basis. The danger remains that inconsistent, unreliable data is just as problematic as having no data at all.

Reasons for the relative shortage of knife research.

- 4.14 It is clear from the above that there is a shortage of good quality research on knife crime in the UK. Arguably knife crime receives relatively little attention compared to gun crime. Knives are widely available to people of all ages and circumstance, whereas guns are not at all commonplace. This results in gun crimes often having a stronger resonance as they are still relatively infrequent in comparison to knives.

⁵¹ 'Knife Crime': Ineffective reactions to a distracting problem? A review of evidence and policy. (August 2006) The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, King's College, London.

Some felt that this had arguably led to the (over) prioritising of resources to gun-related crimes and issues. This can only be exacerbated by a lack of comprehensive statistics on the prevalence of knife crime in comparison to firearm crimes.

- 4.15 This could be because most knives are inexpensive, unlicensed household items, and are usually used for innocuous purposes by law abiding individuals. As such, although they have the potential to be lethal they are viewed as relatively innocuous when we compare them to firearms. Guns are glamorised and deeply immersed in a 'gangster' subculture that does not exist to the same extent with knives. It is not possible to outlaw knives since they have many practical uses which often need sharp edges and points. In any case, it has been claimed that if knives are outlawed then simply outlaws will use knives.
- 4.16 The lack of reliable statistics on knife crime may also result in it missing the radar of researchers and funding bodies as a much needed area of enquiry.
- 4.17 The lack of research is a serious issue as understanding the root causes of knife carrying and knife use is paramount to developing the right initiatives to tackle it. As the author of a CCSJ report stated:

The Government is constructing responses without any credible evidence that they will be successful. Knife amnesties will have a negligible impact since knives will be available as long as there is unsliced bread.

(Chris Eades, Policy and Information Officer at the Centre for Crime and Justice Studies)⁵²

- 4.18 This report points out just how much we still don't know about knife-related offences, their causes and solutions.
- 4.19 Independent assessments are a useful tool in determining the use and motivation behind research. The UCL Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science (JDI) report 'Rationalisation of current research on guns, gangs and other weapons' is a useful document that aimed to identify what work was being done and then contribute to the development of a strategy to guide future research and interventions. As it stands there is no similar document in existence that adopts a similar approach to knife crime literature.
- 4.20 However, the CCJS report (outlined above) is probably the closest piece of work to that presented by the JDI report. This is a useful starting point to identify the priority gaps in the knowledge on knives.

⁵² Knife Crime: New Report (2006). Available at: <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/phpnews/wmview.php?ArtID=1327>

Knife Crime and the Role of the Media

- 4.21 The mass media are powerful tools in contemporary society having the power to generate interest, fear and even hysteria. The lack of credible research only serves to exacerbate the problem as there is no counter position to offset media claims.
- 4.22 The current trend is to depict out-of-control youths roaming the streets with offensive weapons with the intent to use them. Just some of the recent headlines that have appeared in national newspapers are outlined below.

One man dead, another clings to life in knife attack epidemic

(Times Online, May 2006)⁵³

Knife crime rockets in UK⁵⁴

(The Sun, August 2007)⁵⁵

Man dies after crazed random knife attacks

(The Daily Mail, December 2004)⁵⁶

- 4.23 It is easy to see how these headlines can serve to fan the flames of panic and alarm amongst UK citizens. This representation within the popular mass media may go some way to explaining why research has often found that individuals claim to carry knives (and other weaponry) through fear and as a self defence mechanism.
- 4.24 Enforcement and punitive responses, such as introducing metal detectors and searches of pupils in schools, can also serve to raise alarm amongst UK citizens and may actually increase the phenomenon of carrying knives amongst young people. Some pupils are streetwise enough to hide knives near their school gates, for use on the way to and from school.
- 4.25 However, the media should not be perceived as all bad. They are also a very useful tool for ensuring that knife crime stays high on the political agenda. It is powerful in demanding the attention of politicians and the Home Office alike and lobbying for action to be taken (albeit often based on little evidence of efficacy).

⁵³ 'One man dead, another clings to life in knife attack epidemic' (May 31st 2006) in [TimesOnline](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article670054.ece). Available at: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article670054.ece>

⁵⁴ If a concerted effort to tackle knife crime results in an increase in the number of recorded knife related crimes in the UK, which it presumably will, it is precisely this type of headline that needs to be avoided. The media need to be instilled with a sense of responsibility to explain to the public how crime statistics are affected by police strategies and activities. Rises in crime figures may well be the result of a more proactive police response.

⁵⁵ 'Knife crime rockets in UK' (August 19th 2007) in [The Sun](http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article265109.ece). Available at: <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/article265109.ece>

⁵⁶ 'Man dies after crazed random knife attacks' (December 2004) in [The Daily Mail](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=331834&in_page_id=1770) http://www.dailymail.co.uk/pages/live/articles/news/news.html?in_article_id=331834&in_page_id=1770

4.26 The media does present exaggerated claims on the extent of knife crime, but at the same time rather paradoxically, it has been instrumental in attempting to uncover the true extent of KEC in relation to serious violent offences. After all, it was journalists who accessed the current data on knife crime from 37 police forces under the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 5. Comments and Recommendations

- 5.1 This section outlines some key comments and recommendations that have emerged from the research.
- 5.2 **A standardised working definition of knife crime needs to be developed and its use adopted by all key agencies.** This was clearly articulated by those we interviewed who saw the need to categorise knife crime into its component parts such as the illegal possession of a knife, carrying a knife, using a knife to threaten or intimidate and using a knife to injure another person. This review has shown that we need to encourage a culture whereby what is actually meant by 'knife crime' is always coherently communicated. Catch-all phrases such as 'sharp instruments' need breaking down to separate knives from broken bottles or glasses.
- 5.3 **A national framework to guide the recording of knife statistics needs to be developed if the nature and frequency of KEC is to be understood.** This should not be limited to serious crimes as is currently the case. If these statistics were available then targeted work could be done with those who carry and use knives. Currently the characteristics of perpetrators or those at a risk of offending is largely based on assumption.
- 5.4 **In terms of survey work, there needs to be an understanding of what other work has been done. If the commissioners of surveys could coordinate in order to ask the same questions, a more complete picture of knife trends would be achievable.** In a similar vein, surveys need to ensure that their questions are asked in a way that gleans the maximum possible information. One such example, of a poorly constructed question comes from the MORI Youth Survey when it asks respondents 'have you carried a knife in the previous twelve months'. There is no indication of frequency in this question which limits its usefulness. Questions need to be devised by trained researchers in order to maximise the information gathered.
- 5.5 **Given the limitation of the BCS in terms of sample size, there is a need for a national victim survey looking at the use of weapons in all violent crimes.**
- 5.6 **A well-coordinated, national research programme needs to be devised with clear aims and objectives.** There is a tendency for research to be post hoc, shoestring efforts by the untrained and self-interested practitioner for a variety of reasons – a lack of available resources being the most striking. This culture needs to change.

5.7 **One task that needs to be undertaken urgently is an independent audit and evaluation of all initiatives aimed at tackling the carrying and use of knives. Initiatives need to be categorised into different approaches, assessed and evaluated in order to establish and disseminate good practice.** A preliminary categorisation of approaches could be:

- Educational programmes
- Preventative programmes
- Rehabilitation programmes
- Knife amnesties
- Legislative approaches e.g. increased sentences
- Enforcement approaches e.g. the use of Fixed Penalty Notices for knife possession

There has been little or no credible evaluation of existing interventions to address knife crime exacerbated by the lack of data to aid monitoring and evaluation. This needs to change if we are to understand how to tackle knife crime holistically.

5.8 **Qualitative pieces of research are needed that focus on the factors that result in young people carrying and using knives.** These should explore the different regional and local sub-cultures that provide the contexts for particular types of knife crime. These may be of great significance in designing effective responses. However, they tend to be lost when national statistics and reports merge several distinct patterns under a single generalised 'umbrella'.

5.9 There are a number of think tanks, organisations and groups that exist to tackle knife crime but these exist in a relatively uncoordinated fashion, often with little awareness of the existence of one another. They appear to work in isolation which results in the duplication of work and conflicting information. This ultimately leads to a waste of scarce resources. **Stronger partnership between community-based projects and statutory criminal justice agencies could maximise their impact and sustainability. Partnership working on both a local and national level could improve continuity in the fight against knife crime.**

5.10 **Engage in a dialogue with education from central government down to remove the stigma.** The role of education in tackling knife crime was considered essential by many commentators. It is recognised that the competitive nature of the way schools work may mean that they are often reluctant to admit they might have a problem, or they think that by undertaking work on knife crime or weapons awareness they are indicating that they do have a problem. It is also clear that many teachers feel that the curriculum is over-crowded and that there is little room to address the misuse of knives and other weapons effectively.

- 5.11 **An informed response to knife crime needs to be formulated that tackles root causes and underlying issues.** It is clear that knives are simply the tools used to carry out violent acts. It is argued that if you take away the knife, it will simply be replaced by another instrument or means of inflicting injury. Knives can be regarded as an essential part of life, particularly culinary life. The majority of households have a number of potentially fatal knives in their kitchens. In light of this, any strategies aimed at reducing the availability of knives are ultimately going to be limited in their impact. This is not to say that amnesties are not useful for disposing of lethal weapons, but rather that such approaches need to be a part of a coordinated strategic approach that utilises a range of different approaches. There is certainly a need to address how businesses and families can safely dispose of unwanted knives and other sharp tools.
- 5.12 **Encourage the media to present an accurate depiction of knife crime in the UK through sensible and responsible reporting.** There is little value in creating a climate of fear about the level of knife crime in the UK. The current hyperbolic tendency of the media could actually serve to increase the number of individuals that carry a knife as they feel it necessary to protect themselves. Changing the culture of newspaper reporting is obviously easier said than done but responsible reporting could be facilitated by issuing good quality press briefings about knife carrying and knife crime that feature reliable research and statistics. It is also important that misrepresented or clearly inaccurate reports are challenged and countered by experts in the field.

The development of a central holding place for research on knife crime would be a useful starting point. This body would need the backing of central government but once established as the authority on all knife related research it would be hoped that journalists would use this as their first port of call when reporting on knife crime and knives.

Section 6. Methodology

6.1 The literature review answers six specific questions on knife related research and data presented by the Royal Armouries. These were:

1. What is the 'Top 10' in recent research on knife crime in the UK? Is the Home Office approved sign of genuine value in designating a quality standard, or an expression that the organisation 'has its heart in the right place'?
2. Other than Home Office & Police statistics, what other sources of comprehensive and reliable figures are available to support analysis of trends in knives and knife related crime? Is case by case data accessible in order to monitor for correlations not provided in the Recorded Crime & BCS tables.
3. Why do many reports cite statistics or examples for which they provide little or no authority (e.g. number of young people who had their own weapon used against them)? Which are the best, up to date pieces of original research and which data used is both robust and referenced?
4. It seems that many similar but separate pieces of research are being commissioned in isolation, often covering similar issues but using different criteria in gathering and interpreting data. Is there a role for a central clearing house', both to act as a 'library' and to provide advice about the gaps that need filling, without wastefully duplicating current reports? Is there an obvious choice of institution for taking on this function?
5. It appears that much of the 'research' is funded by charities, pressure groups or political organisations and is more or less skewed in the questions asked to get the 'evidence' that will back up their views e.g. for or against amnesties, longer custodial sentences, restorative justice, etc. Is it fair to conclude that even the Home Office reports are seeking to show that targets are being met and put a good spin on things, rather than to provide the bare facts? Are any independent assessments available, developing from the Rationalisation of current research... by UCL/JDICS, November 2005? What shortcomings and gaps have been highlighted recently?
6. Why is there such a shortage of research on knife crime compared with that on gun crime? Given the Government's announcement of the collection of statistics on knife crime from April 2007, does it look likely that other agencies will follow the Home Offices lead? Is it clear who is deciding what data will be collected (given that present firearms data is of limited usefulness)?

- 6.2 In order to address the six specified questions Perpetuity undertook a critique of the data and research on knives. This had three elements as outlined below, namely; an assessment of available data, a systematic review of research on knives and stakeholder consultation.

Assessment of data

- 6.3 Official statistics on the nature and frequency of knife crime was accessed and presented in the report. This took the form of the BCS, the police recorded crime statistics and hospitals admissions data. Data was accessed via the internet following a desk based review of what was available.

A Systematic Review

- 6.4 Systematic reviews use rigorous methods for locating, appraising and synthesising evidence from prior evaluation studies. They seek to present the key finding of previous research on a given topic. According to Johnson *et al*⁵⁷. (2000, p. 35), systematic reviews "*essentially take an epidemiological look at the methodology and results sections of a specific population of studies to reach a research-based consensus on a given study topic*". Systematic reviews have explicit objectives (i.e. to explore all available research on knives), explicit criteria for including or excluding studies, and are based on extensive searches for eligible evaluation studies. The criteria employed to conduct this review can be found in Section Three.⁵⁸

Stakeholder Consultation

- 6.5 Following a desk based review on the availability of knife statistics and research, there were still some remaining gaps that could not be filled without the engagement of experts in the field. As such Perpetuity undertook consultation with key stakeholders in a number of fields. Since the knowledge on the various aspects of knives (e.g. knife carrying, knife use, the collection of statistics etc.) was dispersed across numerous agencies and organisations (e.g. the Home Office, the police, researchers, consultants, hospital staff etc.) a question bank was devised. The question bank hosted all the relevant questions that

⁵⁷ Johnson, B.R., et al. (2000). A systematic review of the religiosity and delinquency literature: A research note. In: *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, Issue 16. PP. 32-52.

⁵⁸ It is beyond the scope of this report to discuss all of the features of systematic reviews, but interested readers should consult key reports on the topic (see e.g., Farrington and Petrosino, 2000).

we required to be answered by the experts. For each consultation relevant questions were selected and placed in an interview schedule.

6.6 Below is a list of those we consulted with. In some cases more than one interview was undertaken:

- Be Safe Project
- Centre for Crime and Justice Studies, King's College London
- Home Office
- Humberside Police
- Kidscount
- KnifeCrimes.Org/ Westley's Weapons Awareness
- Metropolitan Police
- National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers
- Northamptonshire Police
- Northumbria Police
- People Against Knife Crime (personal safety trainers)
- Professor John Pitts, University of Bedfordshire
- Royal Armouries
- West Yorkshire Police

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