

<b>Bath &amp; North East Somerset Council</b>	
MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	<b>Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development &amp; Scrutiny Panel</b>
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	<b>10 March 2025</b>
TITLE:	<b>Knife Crime Prevention Scrutiny Task Group – Final report</b>
WARD:	All
<b>AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM</b>	

## **1 THE ISSUE**

- 1.1 To present to the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel the findings and recommendations to emerge from the Task Group review of Knife Crime Prevention.

## **2 RECOMMENDATION**

**The Panel is asked to;**

- 2.1 Endorse the Task Group’s findings and recommendations, and;**
- 2.2 Agree for the recommendations to be forwarded to the Cabinet/Cabinet member for response.**

## **3 THE REPORT**

- 3.1 [Council - 20 July 2023](#) invited scrutiny to review the impact of knives on Bath and North East Somerset’s young people, with a focus on prevention.
- 3.2 In response, the Children, Adults, Health and Wellbeing (CAHW) Policy and Scrutiny (PDS) Panel at its meeting of [18 September 2023](#) established a Task Group to consider the work taking place to tackle and prevent knife crime in Bath and North East Somerset and to explore opportunities to further develop these approaches.

### 3.3 Membership

The Task Group membership is listed below:

Cllr Dine Romero (Chair)  
Cllr Karen Walker (Vice Chair)  
Cllr Liz Hardman  
Cllr Shaun Hughes  
Cllr Eleanor Jackson

### 3.4 Terms of reference

The Task Group was established with the following terms of reference:

- A) To identify the current position in relation to knife crime within Bath and North East Somerset, with a particular focus on young people
- B) To consider the local position in comparison to national and comparator data
- C) To review current approaches to the prevention of knife crime across Bath and North East Somerset
- D) To review knife crime prevention national best practice examples
- E) To consider opportunities for improving prevention of knife crime across Bath and North East Somerset

### 3.5 Meetings

The Task Group has met on 5 occasions to gather evidence:

Date	Focus	Witnesses
1 November 2023	Scoping the review	Supported by the Inclusive Communities Manager
27 November 2023	Development of a plan to prevent and reduce serious violence in Bath and North East Somerset	Associate Director and Consultant in Public Health and Public Health Registrar
29 January 2024	Update from Avon & Somerset Police	Officers representing local policing, the Early Intervention Team and the Office for the Police and Crime Commission
19 March 2024	Update from St Giles Trust	Director of Development
19 April 2024	Updates from Violence Reduction Unit, Youth	Violence Reduction Partnership Coordinator,

	Connect and Project 28	Youth Connect - Head of Operations and Practice, Young People's Service Manager – DHI
20 January 2025	Update on implementation of the Serious Violence Reduction Plan and work on prevention	Officers representing Violence Reduction Partnership and Prevention Services
10 February 2025	Final meeting to discuss findings and recommendations	

## Findings

### The current position

3.6 In 2022 there were 4,536 episodes of violence against the person in B&NES. This represents a 10% increase on 2021 figures, which is in line with national trends.

3.7 Overall, B&NES is below the national average for hospital admissions for violence, as illustrated below:

2018-2021 B&NES recorded 32.1 cases per 100,000 (pop)

2018-2021 England recorded 41.9 cases per 100,000 (pop).

3.8 The overall picture relating to knife crime within B&NES is less clear. When considering quantitative data, the trend appears to be a reduction in knife crime – **see Table 1**. However, qualitatively the perception is that knife crime/risk has increased, with young people and professionals suggesting that knife carrying amongst young people is on the rise.

3.9 One potential justification for this difference is centred on how the data is collected. The Task Group learnt that hospital admissions record injuries rather than cause of injury. When combined with a reluctance to report all knife crime risks and incidents to the relative authorities, the difference potentially emerges.

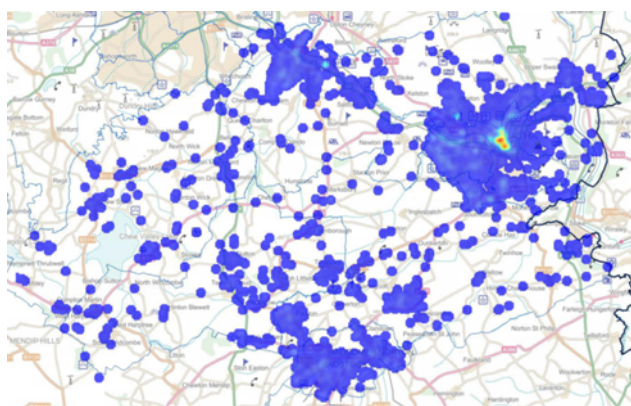
**Table 1** Counts of occurrences of possession of a bladed weapon and occurrences of Home Office criteria for knife related offences, Jan-Dec per year

Local Authority	Possession of a bladed weapon				HO criteria for knife related offences			
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2019	2020	2021	2022
B&NES	37	36	20	21	89	88	62	74
Bristol E	66	58	47	62	175	181	167	187
Bristol N	87	70	78	94	179	197	258	212
Bristol S	52	41	52	47	115	135	140	152
North Somerset	125	50	65	52	113	126	90	76
Somerset E	39	49	54	52	106	107	79	117
Somerset W	65	70	57	68	112	141	109	118
S Gloucestershire	38	41	45	39	113	99	130	126

### **Incident locations and timings**

3.10 The analysis presented to the Task Group suggested that serious violence (not solely knife crime) was more likely to take place in high footfall areas, such as outside take away restaurants and bars, as illustrated below in **Figure 1**.

**Figure 1 Cluster map for serious violence incidents**



3.11 Violent offences peak in the summer months and tend to cluster around school and finishing times.

### **Who are the perpetrators?**

3.12 When considering perpetrators of knife crime in B&NES:

- over 90% are male
- 46% are under 25
- amongst youth offenders most are aged 15-17 years.

**3.13** Perhaps the key learning to emerge from the review is that **perpetrators are often victims themselves.**

- 3.14 One of the challenges for Bath being a well-connected hub with a thriving centre is that naturally visitors are attracted from outside B&NES. The information presented highlighted that this can also include perpetrators of violence. Avon and Somerset Police and the Violence Reduction Partners both discussed how they were increasingly working with neighbouring forces/partners in response to this risk.

### **Why is knife crime concern increasing?**

- 3.15 The evidence suggested demand for cocaine and increased ownership of smart phones - and their use in glamourising violence - were key factors contributing negatively to knife crime.
- 3.16 Members were told that focus group workshops – as part of the development of the Serious Violence Reduction plan - had recently taken place to explore why children in B&NES were becoming involved in serious violence. The focus groups included representatives from both police and education.
- 3.17 The key conclusion to emerge from the workshops was the complexity that underpins serious violence/knife crime. Some potential contributing factors in B&NES include the above average number of fixed and permanent school exclusions and the fact that high risk individuals tend to be overrepresented in these groups. Members noted the links between poor attainment, exclusion and serious violence.
- 3.18 Additionally, the Task Group considered the role of technology in perpetuating violence. For example, in a recent survey of year six students in B&NES almost a quarter had searched for violent images, films or games. The concern being that this normalises violence.
- 3.19 Other risk factors identified to the Task Group included adverse childhood experiences, children in need, deprivation, unemployment and housing. Importantly these may not occur in isolation, reinforcing the point relating to complexity.

### **Responding to knife crime and serious violence**

- 3.20 When considering the approaches to combatting serious violence, including knife crime, the Task Group learnt that in 2019 a structure of Violence Reduction Units was introduced across the Avon and Somerset policing area. The units were subsequently changed to Violence Reduction Partnerships (VRP), reflecting the collaborative approach towards reducing crime. Partners within the B&NES VRP include police, justice, fire, health and the council as the specified authorities, with additional support from other agencies including education and the third sector, as required. Members noted that knife crime was increasingly being seen as a societal problem with a public health approach seen as most effective response.
- 3.21 B&NES's VRP has an extensive training programme in place which includes:
- Awareness events (three/four) have been held – these involved a talk from a parent from Bristol whose child had died following a knife attack.
  - Street Doctors harm reduction training for professionals and children

- An education inclusion project
- County lines awareness
- Be the Change (aimed at higher education)
- Detached youth work
- Youth sport mentoring
- Lived experience mentoring

3.23 Members were told that knife crime prevention is much more effective with school buy in. The team had produced a knife crime handbook for schools and this had been well received.

3.24 The Task Group welcomed Evan Jones from the St Giles's Trust to provide evidence. St Giles' was formed in 1960 and work with young people to prevent violence. Working closely in particular with people impacted by gangs.

3.25 Members noted that a 'drag and drop' approach would not necessary work i.e. a model adopted in Hackney might not be effective in North East Somerset.

3.26 However, St Giles did highlight that when victims arrive in hospital with injuries this offers a reachable moment for engagement and an opportunity for reflection/positive change.

## Conclusions

3.27

- i. It was established that the underlying risks behind knife crime are complex. Often linked to societal problems, the legislated solution is a partnership approach viewing knife crime prevention through a public health lens. This is the approach adopted within B&NES. Members of the Task Group generally agreed with this approach however, there was a minority feeling that the focus should be more heavily focused on deterrents and enforcement.
- ii. Perpetrators are often victims themselves, reinforcing the complexity around knife crime.
- iii. Social media not only presents challenges but opportunities. For young people the online community was seen partly responsible for glamourising violence however, it can also act as a safe space and is an area that can support the prevention agenda.
- iv. Cross-border collaboration is key as perpetrators and victims in our area are not necessarily residents of Bath and North East Somerset.
- v. Adverse early years and school experiences increase the risk around knife crime. Members felt this point highlighted the need to prioritise preventative services, particularly in relation to early life experiences. This has been addressed in the recommendations through the proposal to establish a new Task Group.

- vi. Data on the subject reinforces the complexity, with the analysis showing knife crime reducing, whereas fear of knife crime is increasing.

## **Recommendations**

3.28

- i. Cabinet member for Children's Services to add knife crime prevention to the list of responsibilities sitting within that portfolio.
- ii. CAHW Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel to establish a Task Group to explore in more detail the work being undertaken around targeted early help and prevention.
- iii. In recognition of the importance of a good school experience, the council to continue to prioritise its work with schools, partners and the Regional Director's Office to reduce the number of school suspensions and exclusions across Bath and North East Somerset.
- iv. The Cabinet Member to commit to the ongoing support for the Violence Reduction Partnership and the various initiatives helping to promote violence reduction.
- v. The council through its outreach offer to continue to explore positive alternatives for young people during teachable moments.
- vi. Future plans for violence reduction to integrate the opportunities offered online to promote safe spaces for young people.

## **4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 The Task Group report reflects the statutory duties placed upon the local authority in regards to violence reduction.

## **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)**

- 5.1 The review does not propose any additional spend its recommendations linked to the use of existing resources.

## **6 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

## **7 EQUALITIES**

- 7.1 The evidence gathering to date has clearly demonstrated that equality issues are key to ensuring reduction strategies are successful. Noting that knife crime perpetrators are often victims the report calls for a further Task Group review of the council's targeted early help/prevention services.

## 8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 The Task Group review has been undertaken across Microsoft Teams, enabling witnesses to participate, some from as far as London, without requiring to travel.

## 9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 9.1 This report summarises the information presented to the Task Group. Members discussed the conclusions and recommendations as part of the process.

## 10 CONSULTATION

- 10.1 The final report of the Task Group will be agreed by Task Group members before being submitted to Panel for approval and onward referral to Cabinet/Cabinet member.

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<b>Background papers</b>	None
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	