



Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

To:	The Sussex Police & Crime Panel.
From:	The Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner.
Subject:	The role of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner in ensuring Sussex Police provide an effective response to knife-enabled crime.
Date:	2 July 2026.
Recommendation:	That the Sussex Police & Crime Panel note the report.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report sets out the role of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) in ensuring that Sussex Police provide an effective response to knife-enabled crime in Sussex.
- 1.2 The report also provides an outline of the threat and scale of knife crime, the Sussex Police response to knife-enabled crime, national strategy and legislation to tackle knife crime, and the role of the Sussex PCC in this process in terms of holding the Chief Constable to account for performance in this area.

2.0 Threat and scale of knife crime in Sussex and England Wales

- 2.1 There were 49,151 knife-enabled crimes recorded in England and Wales between 1 January 2025 – 31 December 2025. This equated to 5,397 fewer offences recorded compared to the 54,548 crimes recorded in the same period in 2024 and represented a 10% reduction.
- 2.2 In Sussex, total recorded knife-enabled crimes reduced by 15% across 2025, with 167 fewer offences recorded [940] across the calendar year compared to the 1,107 knife-enabled crimes recorded in 2024. Sussex Police also recorded the 32nd lowest volume of knife-enabled crimes across the 43 police force areas for the same 12-month period.
- 2.3 These reductions were also greater than the collective 9% reduction recorded by the police forces in the South East region [Hampshire Constabulary, Kent Police, Surrey Police and Thames Valley Police] and the reduction recorded for all police forces nationally [-10%].
- 2.4 The prevalence of knife-enabled crime in Sussex continues to remain low, with 53 offences involving a knife or sharp instrument per 100,000 population recorded across 2025, compared to 80 offences per 100,000 for all forces in England and Wales. The Force was also positioned 20th out of 43 police force areas nationally in terms of the lowest number of offences recorded [per 100,000 population] across the same 12-month period.
- 2.5 One of the challenges for the police is that there is no national definition of knife crime and, as such, this can be interpreted to include any criminal offence that is commissioned with the use of a knife, bladed or pointed article, including razors and broken glass bottles. It is also important to note that knife-enabled crime is different from unlawful ownership or possession of a knife, blade or other pointed article.

- 2.6 Knife-enabled crime includes several crime types where a knife, bladed or other pointed article is used or threatened in the commission of the specified offence, with the majority consisting of assault and/or robbery. This also extends to offences where the weapon may not have been seen but is believed to be present at the time of the offence by the victim or witness(es). Knife-enabled crime must also take place in person and does not include remote threats or instances when images of knives are sent to individuals via social media.
- 2.7 Further information about 'Defining knife crime' can be viewed on the College of Policing website through the following link:
<https://www.college.police.uk/guidance/knife-crime-problem-solving-guide/defining-knife-crime>

3.0 Sussex Police response to knife-enabled crime

- 3.1 Knife-enabled crime is one of the agreed priorities for Sussex Police in 2026/27 and continues to be included within the control strategy used by the Force. This approach ensures that dedicated police resources are proactively tasked with delivering targeted policing activity in this area, collaborative work with statutory partners and other agencies is maximised and that the workforce is aware of the importance of preventing and tackling knife crime effectively.
- 3.2 Sussex Police undertake year-round policing activity and focused operations to prevent knife-enabled crime, educate individuals about the possible consequences of carrying knives [and other offensive weapons] and deliver targeted enforcement activity at locations throughout Sussex identified as having higher-than-average rates of knife-enabled crime and serious violence. This collective activity is delivered across three strands of policing: prevention, education and enforcement.
- 3.3 Prevention
- 3.3.1 The Force work collaboratively with a range of statutory and non-statutory partners to address serious violence and the underlying causes of violent crime throughout Sussex. This partnership activity is delivered through the Sussex Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) which provides the leadership and strategic coordination around the local response to serious violence.
- 3.3.2 Launched in 2019/20, the Partnership brings together specialist partners from the police, local government, probation services, health and social care providers and the community, charity and voluntary sector to tackle serious violence and the underlying causes of violent crime.
- 3.3.3 Early intervention and preventative work are recognised to be fundamental in terms of reducing the risk of serious violence to individuals and local communities. During 2025/26, the VRP worked with more than 4,500 children and young people engaged in intervention activity across Sussex to try and deter them serious violence and knife crime.
- 3.3.4 In line with the Home Office Young Futures Programme, Sussex established a Young Futures Prevention Panel (YFPP) pilot in West Sussex in September 2025 to identify 'at risk' children and young people through a series of referral pathways. The Panel consists of multi-agency partners and meets bi-monthly to consider each child and young person and determine what support is required and which service is best-placed to provide it.

- 3.3.5 Following its launch, 178 young people were referred to the Panel across the trial period to 31 March 2026, of which 85 of these individuals met the criteria to receive active referrals [48%]. The pilot will run for a further year during 2026/27, after which it is anticipated that YFPPs will be rolled out nationally across England and Wales in 2027/28.
- 3.3.6 Sussex Police has developed a Habitual Knife Carrier (HKC) index to identify, monitor and support individuals and cohorts at risk of becoming involved in knife-enabled crime. This multi-agency approach aims to intervene early and divert individuals from current or future involvement in knife-enabled crime and other criminal activity [N.B. The HKC index is now recognised to be 'best practice' and is used by all police force areas in England and Wales].
- 3.3.7 The Force undertake high-visibility patrols and engagement activity in town centres, public places and other 'hotspot' locations throughout Sussex identified as having higher-than-average rates of knife-enabled crime and serious violence. These visible patrols are undertaken by a combination of uniformed and plain clothes officers to maximise the impact and effectiveness. During 2025/26, Sussex Police delivered almost 11,000 hours of targeted hotspot policing patrols and problem-solving activity in these areas which resulted in nearly 100 knives and other offensive weapons being seized from public locations, alongside proactive and visible engagement with circa. 86,000 individuals and local businesses.
- 3.3.8 Stop and search powers are also used where there is reasonable suspicion that individuals are carrying weapons. Sussex Police target known individuals and habitual weapon carriers, where lawful and proportionate grounds exist to do so, based on information and intelligence received from a range of different sources and submissions. During 2025/26, Sussex Police conducted 497 stop and searches as part of this hotspot policing activity which resulted in more than 490 arrests being made.
- 3.3.9 To support this work, the Force undertake knife sweeps and searches of public spaces, wooded areas and undergrowth in hotspot locations throughout the year where intelligence suggests that knife-enabled crime may be an issue or areas where drug-related offences are known to have taken place previously.
- 3.3.10 Sussex Police continue to use knife arches [i.e. walk-through metal detectors] and other technology to find and detect metallic objects, including knives and other weapons, in public spaces and schools, colleges and other educational establishments as part of targeted police activity in this area.
- 3.3.11 The Force have also made knife amnesty bins available all year round at police stations across Sussex where individuals can safely dispose of knives, blades or pointed articles [and other offensive weapons] with no repercussions, consequences or questions asked.
- 3.3.12 Sussex Police and partners have continued to deliver on the Serious Violence Duty locally. The duty was introduced nationally in January 2023 to ensure that all relevant services and responsible authorities work together to share information and collaborate on interventions to prevent and reduce serious crimes in local communities. The work of the Force and partners in delivering the duty in Sussex is overseen by a Violence Reduction Executive Board, chaired by the Chief Executive & Monitoring Officer within the Office of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner.

3.3.13 Sussex Police also plan to introduce a Safer Knife Replacement Scheme pilot in 2026/27 which will swap pointed kitchen knives with safer round-ended ones. The scheme builds on best practice identified in other police force areas and aims to make homes, schools and communities safer, and lower the risk of harm in households identified as being at greater risk of harm, whether by accident or on purpose. Individuals who take part in the replacement scheme receive safety advice about the dangers of inappropriate knife use too.

3.4 Education

3.4.1 Sussex Police make proactive visits to schools, colleges and other educational establishments throughout the county – via Neighbourhood Youth Officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) – to provide targeted inputs to children and young people around knife crime awareness, the potential consequences of possessing, carrying and using knives [or other offensive weapons] and the profound trauma these offences can have on victims, families, communities and the professionals who respond.

3.4.2 Sussex Police support Operation Sceptre – a national initiative launched in 2016 to tackle knife crime across England and Wales. This comprises an enhanced policing response delivered through a period of intensified action during two separate weeks of the calendar year [March and November] to raise awareness and educate individuals and communities about knife crime and the work that is taking place locally to tackle the root causes of this serious violence.

3.4.3 The Force also undertakes complementary engagement activity with individuals and local communities to educate them further about knife-enabled crime and remind businesses and retailers about their duty to sell knives [and other weapons] in a lawful and responsible manner.

3.5 Enforcement

3.5.1 Sussex Police continue to review, triage and evaluate any information and intelligence received from members of the public and multi-agency partners about individuals who may be in possession of knives and/or are engaged in the illegal selling of knives [and other weapons]. This includes assessing the submissions made based on threat, harm and risk to determine whether the reported intelligence requires immediate action, a safeguarding response or can be used to support ongoing investigations and pursue enforcement activity.

3.5.2 The Force conducts regular knife test purchases – both online and in person – in partnership with Trading Standards and utilising police cadets as underage volunteers to ensure that the businesses and retailers selling these weapons on a lawful basis are fully compliant with the legislation and age restrictions in place. This approach seeks to use a combination of engagement, education and enforcement, with the outcome taken dependent on an investigation into the individual circumstances involved and/or whether a business or retailer is a repeat offender.

3.5.3 Sussex Police has also increased its partnership working with Border Force and other agencies to intercept illegal knives imported into the country and visit the addresses where these knives were intended for delivery to gather information and intelligence, investigate any other criminal offences that may be identified and undertake enforcement activity as appropriate.

3.5.4 Further information about the Sussex Police response to serious violence, including knife crime, can be viewed through the following link:
<https://www.sussex.police.uk/police-forces/sussex-police/areas/campaigns/campaigns/serious-violence/>

4.0 National strategy and legislation to tackle knife crime

4.1 In April 2026, the Government published a plan – ‘Protecting lives, building hope’ – which set out the actions being taken to deliver a sustained reduction in knife crime to meet its ambition to halve knife crime in a decade. This includes a commitment to:

- ✓ SUPPORT young people so they get a better start in life
- ✓ STOP those at risk from turning to knife crime
- ✓ POLICE our streets to punish perpetrators and stop offending
- ✓ END the cycle of knife crime

4.2 The plan can be viewed in full through the following link:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protecting-lives-building-hope-a-plan-to-halve-knife-crime>

4.3 The implementation of the Crime and Policing Act 2026 [also in April 2026] strengthened further the law on the online sale of knives and ensured that the police and the courts now have the necessary powers to remove offensive weapons from the streets, public spaces and communities across England and Wales. This included specific enhancements to:

- strengthen age verification requirements for the online sale and delivery of knives and crossbows
- introduce a requirement on retailers to report bulk sales of bladed articles
- hold senior managers of online platforms personally liable for failure to take action to remove illegal content relating to knives and offensive weapons
- enable the police to seize, retain and destroy knives held in private when they are lawfully on private property and have reasonable grounds to suspect the item(s) will likely be used in connection with unlawful violence
- increase the maximum penalty, from six months’ imprisonment to two years’ imprisonment, for the offences of private possession, importation, manufacture, sale or supply of prohibited offensive weapons and knives and of selling knives to those under 18
- introduce a new offence of possession of a knife or offensive weapon in public or private with intent to use unlawful violence. The offence will carry a maximum penalty of seven years’ imprisonment. The police will also have a new power to seize knives on any premises if they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the knife is likely to be used in connection with unlawful violence.

5.0 Funding secured by the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

5.1 The PCC was successful in securing funding worth more than £2.919million during 2025/26 to tackle serious violence in Sussex, including targeted activities to improve the police response to knife-enabled crime and the possession of other offensive weapons. This funding comprised:

- ✓ £1.436million from the Home Office Hotspot Response Fund to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and serious violence in the highest demand locations after recognising the crossover that exists between both areas of criminality
- ✓ £1.047million from the Home Office to maintain the local response to serious violence and support violence reduction throughout the county through the Violence Reduction Partnership
- ✓ £269,749 to assist Sussex Police and all relevant services and responsible authorities to work together to deliver the Serious Violence Duty by sharing information and collaborating on interventions to prevent and reduce serious crimes in local communities
- ✓ £167,700 to deliver a Young Futures Prevention Panel pilot in West Sussex to identify children and young people at an escalating risk of being drawn into crime and ASB at an earlier stage and to provide them with access to local support services and interventions to divert them away from this offending behaviour

5.2 These funds are in addition to the funding worth more than £15.175million secured by the PCC in previous years to strengthen the police and partner response to tackling serious violence [and knife crime] in Sussex and to reduce the harm caused to individuals and local communities. The amount of funding received each year, and the funding use, is summarised in the table below:

Year	Amount	Funding Use
2024/25	£2.752m	'Hotspot' response funding to tackle ASB and serious violence in the highest demand locations; Violence Reduction Partnership and implementation of the Serious Violence Duty
2023/24	£1.847m	'GRIP' funding to tackle serious violence and knife crime; Violence Reduction Partnership and implementation of the Serious Violence Duty
2022/23	£2.123m	'GRIP' funding to tackle serious violence and knife crime and Violence Reduction Partnership
2021/22	£2.000m	'GRIP' funding to tackle serious violence and knife crime; Violence Reduction Partnership; SWITCH mentoring programme and trauma informed training programme
2020/21	£2.450m	'Surge' enforcement activity; Early Intervention Youth Programme: REBOOT and Violence Reduction Partnership
2019/20	£3.111m	'Surge' enforcement activity; Early Intervention Youth Programme: REBOOT and Violence Reduction Partnership
2018/19	£0.891m	Early Intervention Youth Programme: REBOOT

N.B. The PCC has secured more than £18.094million to tackle serious violence, including knife crime, in Sussex since 2018/19.

- 5.3 In March 2026, the PCC secured a further £594,909 from the Home Office through the Knife Crime Concentration Fund (KCCF) which aims to halve knife crime in England and Wales within a decade. This funding will be used to deliver intensive, problem-solving activity in four targeted, high-harm locations across Sussex to reduce knife crime – two in Brighton and one each in Eastbourne and Crawley. This enhanced and targeted policing activity will be delivered across 2026/27 and will be monitored by the PCC at her monthly webcast Performance & Accountability Meetings [see 'Role of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner' for more information].
- 5.4 The PCC allocated a further £1.215million to Brighton & Hove City Council, East Sussex County Council and West Sussex County Council and each of the 12 District and Borough Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in Sussex across 2026/27. This was the 14th consecutive year that the PCC has protected this funding, despite reductions in national funding allocations, which has been used by each of the CSPs to tackle crime and local priorities, including serious violence, knife crime and the possession of offensive weapon offences.
- 5.5 Other local projects which provide diversionary activities for children and young people to develop resilience in positive settings and, indirectly, tackle serious violence and knife crime in Sussex have been supported through the Safer in Sussex Community Fund (SiSCF). This included 17 projects [ranging from youth clubs to boxing clubs to mentoring initiatives] which received £57,777 of funding in 2025/26.
- 5.6 The SiSCF provides financial support [grant awards up to £5,000] to a diverse range of local organisations and community projects that aim to reduce crime and improve community safety. In total, £2.425million has been allocated by the PCC to support 624 community projects since the fund was first created.

6.0 Role of the Sussex Police & Crime Commissioner

- 6.1 The Sussex PCC recognises that tackling knife-enabled crime effectively remains fundamentally important to better protect the communities in Sussex.
- 6.2 The PCC has sought to make additional funding and resources available to the Chief Constable to increase the capacity and capability of Sussex Police to deliver targeted activities to tackle knife-enabled crime and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the response provided by the Force.
- 6.3 Now that this investment has been realised through increases in the police precept in recent years and the additional funding secured nationally, the PCC will hold the Chief Constable to account for the delivery of an enhanced policing response. This will include an expectation that Sussex Police continue to tackle knife-enabled crime by identifying children and young people at an escalating risk of being drawn into knife crime and providing them with greater access to local support services and interventions to divert them away from this offending behaviour.
- 6.4 It is a statutory responsibility for the PCC to hold the Chief Constable to account for delivering efficient and effective policing in Sussex that is responsive to the needs of the public. The PCC has continued to use her monthly webcast Performance & Accountability Meetings (PAMs) to scrutinise and challenge the Chief Constable about the Sussex Police response to knife-enabled crime on behalf of members of the public.

6.5 The Force's response to knife crime was raised at the most recent PAM on 21 May 2026 [Office for National Statistics – Knife Crime]. This area was also discussed at the PAMs on 25 November 2025 [Operation Sceptre – Knife Crime Awareness Week]; 22 May 2025 [Knife-Enabled Crime] and 18 October 2024 [Knife Amnesty – National Surrender and Compensation Scheme]. Each of these sessions is archived and, together with the summary notes from the meeting, can be viewed on the PCC's website through the following link:
<https://www.sussex-pcc.gov.uk/about/how-we-work/watch-live/>

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