

Chief Constable fortnightly update to the Police and Crime Commissioner - 23 May 2025 [#443056832]

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Dear Police and Crime Commissioner Philip Wilkinson,

This week is Sceptre – the national knife crime awareness week involving all 43 forces across England and Wales. Much of the social media presence by Wiltshire Police this week has highlighted our focussed activity to support this week of action, however I wanted to provide further detail to you and our communities.

One of my three organisational priorities is to tackle and reduce the level of violence and serious harm in our communities, and I welcome your support in achieving this outcome through your ongoing focus in your Police and Crime Plan for 2025-2029. Your plan emphasises the importance of understanding the causes of knife crime, and all partners must support each other under the Serious Violence Duty to reduce knife crime in our communities.

Firstly, it is important to highlight that Wiltshire remains one of the safest places to live in the country. The most recently published data from the Office of National Statistics shows that Wiltshire Police ranks the lowest nationally for recorded incidents of knife crime with 34 crimes committed per 100,000 people.

Our Force data also shows that we have made considerable progress in reducing the level of knife crime in our communities. In the past 12 months, we had a 9 per cent reduction in recorded knife crimes compared to the previous 12 months – with 736 crimes reported. Swindon recorded a 14.7 per cent decrease, amounting to 61 fewer incidents, while the rest of the county collectively recorded a decrease of 2.2 per cent – 8 fewer incidents.

However, experiencing a reduction in the number of knife crimes reported to us is not enough.

We must continue to proactively tackle criminals who bring violence to our streets through the use of knives and bladed articles, whilst also ensuring better outcomes for victims. We are continuing to improve the outcomes of our criminal investigations into knife crime offences, with 33.7 per cent of offences now resulting in formal action taken, meaning more people are being held to account for their crimes.

We also continue to work with our partners to educate our young people on the dangers of carrying knives. This includes dispelling the myth among young people that carrying a knife offers them protection. We know from the data that this is simply not the case and the sad reality is that carrying a knife makes you much more likely to be a victim of knife crime.

While our work to tackle knife crime takes place all year round, there has been a particular focus on it for the past week as part of Sceptre. As a Force, we have focused on early intervention – to address the root causes of involvement in knife crime and educate young people on the consequences of carrying a knife.

Our activity this week has included:

- Visits by our Neighbourhood Policing Teams to local schools across the whole county, engaging with more than 1400 of our young people to ensure they are aware of the dangers associated with carrying knives and the lifelong consequences it can have
- Using the knife arch at various locations and schools across the county to raise awareness of knife crime and as a discussion point for students
- An [open letter](#), written by Sergeant Gemma Rutter, to parents to ensure they had access to the available advice and support if they are concerned their child is at risk. This letter is being circulated on our behalf by schools across the county
- Working with Trading Standards and Wiltshire Council with the test purchasing of knives
- High visibility patrols in areas which has experienced knife enabled criminality and has involved engagement with all our communities, including our young people, supported by our Mobile Police Stations
- Weapons sweeps across the whole of the County

Wiltshire Police are also working with partners to remove weapons from our streets entirely. We have five permanent knife surrender bins in Swindon (Pinetrees Community Centre, Liden Library, Meadowcroft Playing Fields, Walcot Dome and Broadgreen Community Centre) and one at Wiltshire Football Association HQ in Devizes, plus a temporary bin outside Tidworth Police Station this week. These are jointly funded by the Drugs Forfeiture Fund and our local parish councils and aim to encourage people to hand in any bladed weapons they are carrying. There are also three knife bins supplied by Swindon Charity Owen's World in New College Swindon (Queen's Drive and North Star campuses) and John Moulton Hall. We have been emptying all of these to permanently dispose of weapons from across Wiltshire. We encourage our communities to continue using these – and that they recognise the significance each time they do so - that every act of placing a weapon in a bin could save a life.

I mentioned earlier the Serious Violence Duty, which has successfully brought together various organisations across Wiltshire and shares a vision to reduce serious violence incidents and make Wiltshire and Swindon Safer.

To support the delivery of the Serious Violence Duty, the Violence Reduction Partnership received £250,000 of funding from the Home Office, via the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, and has funded evidence-based initiatives primarily focused on upskilling professionals, early intervention, and education.

These initiatives include:

- Synergy – a project delivered by the police, Fire Service and Army with young people who are involved with the Youth Justice Service, aiming to divert them away from crime, promote career opportunities and build better relationships.
- Focussed deterrence – targeting known young people that are most at risk and diverting them away from criminality.
- Street doctors who provide education sessions for children supported by youth justice teams, teaching them how to treat and respond to injuries from sharp weapons or head injuries caused by violence.
- Swindon food truck which supports young people involved with Youth Justice Services to learn business and catering skills.

- Trauma-informed practice training for police staff and officers

These initiatives have a huge impact in helping to reduce violent offences and also identifies those most at risk of becoming offenders and victims, building stronger relationships with them and supporting skills development to enable them to make positive choices for their future.

As the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Children and Young Persons, I am committed to ensuring that the first contact young people have with us should not be when they are involved in a criminal investigation, be that victim or suspect, but instead through positive interactions within the community to build trust. In Wiltshire, these include initiatives like the knife crime awareness workshops Blunt Truth, which are delivered in schools in collaboration with the NHS; the Mini Police programme; Police Cadets; the Junior Good Citizen Awards and our annual events with the Girl Guides and the Scouts, to name but a few.

Wiltshire Police will continue to work with all its partners and communities to make sure we are keeping the young people of Wiltshire safe.

Kindest regards,

Catherine Roper

Chief Constable, Wiltshire Police



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