



## Report of the Police and Crime Panel

**Report title:** Op Deter – progress update

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> March 2024

**Author and contact:** ACC Local Policing, Christian Bunt

**Purpose of the report:** As requested by the Panel

**Recommendations:** For information only

---

### Executive Summary

Operation Deter (Op Deter) continues to make significant strides in addressing knife crime within the Thames Valley area through its comprehensive approach. The initiative employs a dual strategy, focusing on robust enforcement measures for adults and proactive intervention for young offenders in collaboration with the Youth Offending Team Act Now programme.

### Approach and Implementation

#### Over 18s:

Op Deter's zero-tolerance approach towards adults found in possession of offensive weapons has produced promising results. Any eligible offences are proactively charged by Thames Valley Police (TVP) while the suspect is still in custody. This proactive charging strategy allows for the swift separation of cases, if required, from other more complex offences, ensuring a more timely investigation and outcome.

Following charge, the Custody Sergeant takes a more stringent approach to bail, highlighting the seriousness with which weapon offences are treated under Op Deter. Since its inception in Milton Keynes, the Op Deter pathway for those over 18 has been successfully rolled out across the force area, covering all six custody suites and all 11 Local Policing Areas.

This comprehensive implementation underlines TVP's commitment to effectively addressing knife crime and ensuring consistent enforcement of the law across the Thames Valley region.

#### Ongoing Work and Evaluation:

Thames Valley Police continues to monitor pending cases in court, awaiting updates on a further 193 cases. This ongoing evaluation ensures that the progress of Op Deter is accurately tracked and informs future decision-making processes.

Analysis of outcomes from court proceedings reveals significant insights into the effectiveness of Op Deter's enforcement measures. Suspended sentences emerge as the most common outcome, with 135 cases resulting in this disposition. Following closely are custodial sentences and community orders. Additionally, 61 cases were dismissed or withdrawn, indicating the rigorous scrutiny applied to each case.



## Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Furthermore, 80 cases resulted in other outcomes, including fines and conditional discharges. While these numbers are relatively small compared to more serious outcomes, they reflect the stringent approach taken by TVP in addressing knife crime within the Thames Valley area.

In terms of trends, adult possession offences remain relatively stable over time. However, a noteworthy observation is the peak in youth possession offences in July 2023, followed by a subsequent downward trend. It is essential to highlight that these trends only represent individuals arrested and brought into custody, emphasising the need for continued vigilance and proactive measures.

### **Key Challenge:**

Data management remains a primary challenge for Op Deter. The manual review of 24-hour custody reports demands significant human resources and time investment. Addressing this challenge through technological solutions and streamlined processes is essential to enhance operational effectiveness.

### **Conclusion/Next Steps**

Operation Deter has shown significant progress in combating knife crime in the Thames Valley area. Moving forward, it is crucial to address challenges in data management and sustain proactive policing efforts. Recommendations include:

- Prioritising investments in technology and data management systems to streamline processes and enhance efficiency.
- Sustaining proactive policing efforts through continued collaboration with stakeholders and community partners.
- Exploring innovative approaches to address the root causes of knife crime and support diversionary programmes for at-risk individuals.