



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

Report title: Op Deter – progress

Date: 15 September 2023

Author and contact: ACC Christian Bunt

Purpose of the report: As requested by the Panel

Recommendations: For information only

Executive Summary

Operation Deter (Op Deter) combines two approaches; a more robust criminal justice approach to adults found in possession of an offensive weapon, and for young people, earlier and intensive intervention through the Youth Offending Team Act Now programme aims to divert them from the criminal justice system and prevent further offending.

THE APPROACH AND HOW IT WAS IMPLEMENTED

OVER 18's

Under this zero-tolerance approach, those over 18 found in possession of an offensive weapon are brought to justice more efficiently with the time much reduced between an individual committing an offence, being charged and appearing in court.

Any eligible offences are proactively charged by TVP while the suspect is still in custody, severing these, if required, from other more complex offences to allow for a more timely investigation and outcome. Following charge, the Custody Sergeant will then take a more robust approach to bail.

Since its inception in Milton Keynes, the Op Deter pathway for those over 18 has been rolled out across the force area to all six custody suites and all 11 Local Policing Areas.

Distinctively, the Op Deter approach for those over 18 has been delivered through operational policing and has therefore been implemented without a need for additional funding.

For adults in Milton Keynes, in the two 6 month periods before and after the launch of Op Deter, there was a 35% increase in the number of arrests for knife possession that resulted in charges.

IN THE SIX MONTHS FOLLOWING THE LAUNCH THERE WERE:

- 70 arrests, of which 29 were charged and remanded resulting in 6 custodial sentences at court, 11 suspended sentences, 11 other outcomes, 5 awaiting trial
- 10 straight to prison



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

- 90% of knife possession cases with a positive outcome

Across the whole of Thames Valley Police 1st July 2022 – 31st May 2023:

- 694 arrests
- 248 charged and remanded
- 93 straight to prison
- 36 court outcomes

Evaluation/Early outcomes:

A full independent evaluation of Op Deter is currently being commissioned by the OPCC, funded by the PCC and the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit, but early data indicate a successful implementation of the approach with positive outputs. OVER 18's For adults in Milton Keynes, in the two six-month periods before and after the launch of Op Deter, there was a 35% increase in the number of arrests for knife possession that resulted in charges.

UNDER 18's

For young people under 18, there is an alternative approach which consists of an earlier intensive intervention by the YOT through the Act Now programme. This begins while the young person is still in custody to look at the root causes of offending, determine if they are being exploited and encourage them to engage to break the cycle of offending.

When a young person is arrested, a YOT caseworker attends custody within 90 minutes to meet with that young person to commence the intervention process. This takes place while criminal justice options are still being pursued.

Within 48 hours of leaving custody a further meeting will take place with the young person's parents/ carers. Prior to Act Now, this process could take weeks or even months.

The programme gives young people every opportunity to engage. However, if they fail to engage or their offending is particularly dangerous, the criminal justice route remains the proper course of action.

Act Now pilots were launched in Milton Keynes in January 2023 followed by Slough in March.

Since its launch in January 2023, ACT Now MK has responded to:

- 67 arrests of 53 young people
- 3.77% The current re-offending rate for ACT-NOW is 3.77%



Report of the Police and Crime Panel

In Slough, from March-June 2023, ACT NOW has received 13 referrals with seven young people currently engaging within the ACT NOW Pathway.

Key challenges / Lessons learnt

Within TVP there have been instances where there has been a lack of confidence in utilising police charging decisions, and work has taken place to **educate custody sergeants on when they can use police charging powers as opposed to referring the case** to the CPS. Further education has also taken place in ensuring the correct bladed article offence is used.

Within the Act Now pathway, the teams found that they were receiving referrals for young people who are not residents in Slough or Milton Keynes but had committed a knife-enabled offence there. While they will still attend Custody following the initial referral, the team will then make a safeguarding referral to the relevant Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub sharing as much information as necessary to allow the home local authority to follow up.

Within Act NOW Slough, practitioners have needed to **introduce processes to ensure they are being informed of all young people in custody who are eligible** for the pathway. They now co-locate within Maidenhead custody once a week and have a monthly meeting with all relevant professionals to discuss cases and ensure that all young people have been referred into the pathway.