

Goldstein Awards 2019

Introduction

Title of the project:

Deep Cuts: the journey to understand and reduce knife crime in Colchester

3. Key issue that the project is addressing:

**Reducing knife crime in Colchester
Understanding the reasons behind a local knife crime increase**

Agencies that were involved in the project:

Essex Police- Colchester Community Policing Team

University of Essex

Greenstead Community Centre

The Colchester Institute

Essex Fire and Rescue Service

Colchester Borough Council

Only Cowards Carry

Dance SOS

Realise Futures

Community Halls in Partnership

YMCA

Lads Need Dads

Summary of application

Scanning:

This project addresses the problem of an increase in knife crime in Colchester. It includes addressing the lack of an evidence-based understanding as to why there is this increase.

Analysis:

After confirming this increase of knife crime in Essex, I learned that specifically within Colchester, possession offences had overtaken violence against the person offences (using weapons) at an unprecedented level in recent years. Suspects are disproportionately younger males. More of them were carrying knives, but not using them. This perhaps signalled an educational gap, a lack of fear of consequences or many other possibilities. This was to be explored.

In my attempts to explore this, I found only London-centric academic analysis. Solutions were founded on London problems. I endeavoured to discover how we can best understand our local knife crime problem. I realised this wasn't solely a police problem and relied on wider data sets such as economics, healthcare and education.

Response:

Firstly, I worked with a local community centre to bid for the anti-knife crime community fund. This allowed them to reopen their youth club, provide knife crime lessons and contribute towards buying a knife bin. I also delivered anti-knife crime lessons to other youth clubs in areas vulnerable to knife crime.

Secondly, I worked with a Colchester college, alongside a local charity on enforcing, engaging with and educating the students on knife crime.

Finally, given the limited analysis on the local knife crime problem, I worked with the University of Essex data analysts to help improve our understanding of knife crime in Colchester. This model builds on the success of the Glasgow model by examining the broader causes of knife crime allowing us to tackle it as effectively as possible.

Assessment:

Violence against the person offences were reduced by 7.89%. However, it would be unjustifiable to attribute that solely to this project. I am exploring ways to attribute knife crime levels to this project which I will incorporate into the next stage of it. Tangible results are due for the youth club in March 2019 which will be shared with community centres in the area. The successful college Operation has been expanded to two further campuses and the University.

The University data analysis is ongoing. The results will be published in an academic report with recommendations. Should this improve our policing approach, the model will be shared with other districts and forces.

Number of words: 395

Description of project

Scanning:

This project addresses the problem of an increase in knife crime in Colchester as well as lack of understanding as to why there is this increase.

Evidence-based policing formed the foundations of the project. This was to be a combination of primary and secondary research to measure the extent of the problem and explore possible solutions. I analysed my own data from our crime systems and undertook a survey of local residents as well as examining academic journals, editorials and commentary. The secondary research was very limited and as such, this became part of the problem; and then part of the problem to solve: to better understand our local knife crime problem, using a more powerful evidence-based approach. The Serious Violence Crime Strategy was published in April 2018. This was midway through this project. It does include aspects of the project; such as early intervention and the anti-knife crime community fund. However, it doesn't consider the issue of not understanding the problem at a local level. This provided me with an opportunity to go above and beyond that to get to the heart of the problem in Colchester.

The stakeholders (beyond the suspect and victim) are hard to quantify. It includes their families, friends, schools, the local community and even the national population as this national increase is so widely acknowledged (ITV, 2018; BBC, 2018).

Furthermore, the issue of how police tackle knife crime is a complex one. Suspects are disproportionately the younger population (see analysis). As knife crime is increasingly and justifiably (Guardian, 2008) dealt in a robust manner in order to deter, more and more young people are entering police custody. This increases their chances of reoffending by 68% (Beyond Youth Custody, 2018). This in itself presents a conundrum which can only be attempted to be tackled with a better understanding of the problem.

Analysis:

I broke the problem down by firstly examining if there had been actually been an increase. This was quickly confirmed by Home Office statistics on Essex as a whole (The Sunday Times, 2018). While this increase is in Essex, not specifically Colchester, I did my own analysis and found more emergency calls on knife crime in the year 2017-2018. By the start of 2018, knife crime in Essex had been increasing at a faster rate than in London. I realised Colchester's, or indeed Essex's knife crime numbers are not as high as London's, but the increase gave me an opportunity to be proactive and address this increase.

From doing my own data research on our crime systems, in more recent months possession offences have overtaken violence against the person offences (using weapons) at an unprecedented level in Colchester (see Graph 1).

Using the PAT triangle, certain areas vulnerable to knife crime were identified. The biggest of these was Greenstead, a ward to the east of Colchester. In terms of the victim, they were often known to the suspect. This included some domestic incidents but this was largely where the suspect and victim were older. Certain aggravated robberies included a victim unknown to the suspect. You will see I missed this out from Graph 1. This is due to the similar trend year on year. This was indeed an issue, but my focus was on the increase in possession and violence against the person offences as they showed the largest increase.

I found suspects were disproportionately the younger population (see Graph 2); this was also disproportionate to our suspects for other offences.

Suspects were disproportionately male (see Graph 3), but this was in line with our demographics for other offences. There was no correlation of race or nationality. Data on other conditions of the suspects, such as their level of schooling and economic background was not included on our police systems, which led me to my next question:-

Am I able to understand why has there has been this increase? As mentioned, I discovered the secondary analysis was limited. I found the academic journals, commentary and editorials all largely London-centric. They had national relevance, but their solutions were built on London problems. I realised if I was to maximise the effectiveness of reducing this knife crime increase in Colchester, I would need to understand it as best I could. I also knew this rise was not solely down to policing. It included multiple agencies and data sets beyond our own. However, working with data analysis is no quick task. And there were some recognised issues I believed may be relevant nationally which would allow me to take immediate action. One academic issue that cropped up multiple times was the cuts to youth funding as a cause for this increase (The Independent, 2018; Economist, 2018). Given the age of the suspects, this allowed me to formulate a response I believed would be most effective with what I knew at the time. After school club intervention is considered as one of the most impactful methods on crime by the College of Policing (College of Policing- What Works, 2018).

I took a survey of 11-18 year olds to ask them their views on knife crime. 65% believed knife crime had increased in their local area. 45% were worried about knife crime in their daily life. 20% believed it was increasing but weren't worried about it. I would add that this is a small amount of young people interviewed, but it gave me a preliminary guide to work from while exploring the larger issue of understanding our problem. To support this survey I found academic commentary on this, demonstrating there was a likely educational gap (Bloom, 2018; Intergenerational Foundation, 2018). This was particularly highlighted in the Scotland model, which has been praised by police and academics alike in the way knife crime was reduced by 65% in 12 years (The Economist, 2018). This was, broadly speaking, to look at knife

crime as a healthcare issue. A large part of that was partnering with charities that teach children not to carry knives. New education policies, which reduced school exclusions, also helped such work.

I then examined the current work we are doing to fill that gap. In Essex, the Fire Service delivers our lessons in schools. I sat in on a lesson which was very impactful, but I could see this was only targeting a certain age range that attends school. With over 7000 under 16s permanently excluded from school (Gov.uk, 2018), there was a gap here of young people not receiving this lesson.

Response:

In my response, I took a three-pronged approach:

Firstly, having identified Greenstead as an area vulnerable to knife crime; as well as an educational gap and national problem with youth services funding; I worked with the community centre to tackle the issues.

Secondly, the key suspect age group are of school and college age. I worked with a local college, with the support of a local charity on engaging with and educating the students on knife crime.

Finally, I worked with the University of Essex data analysts to help improve our understanding of knife crime in Colchester.

To begin, I learned of a Home Office anti-knife crime community fund (Home Office, 2018). I had initially applied for it on behalf of Essex Police. I had put together a bid with 5 partner agencies all on board.

Unfortunately, it was rejected as this fund was not intended for police forces. However, determined to get this good bid in somehow, I worked with one of the key partner agencies, Greenstead Community Centre. I allowed them to use my draft bid, make it their own and send it. It was accepted and they received £4000.

The manager and I worked closely together to use this funding as effectively as possible. As a result, a new youth club has been launched (by the YMCA) out of these funds. This will include lessons from Only Cowards Carry (a local anti-knife charity), Lads Need Dads and Realise Futures. Dance SOS will perform, teach and recruit young people at the hall and showcase their performances on anti-knife crime.

Furthermore, it included funds to work with local businesses on their corporate responsibility not selling knives to under 18s. They have also used the funds to save for a knife bin to be placed outside the community centre. The results are being measured by Greenstead Community Centre and are being collated and sent back to the Home Office for March 2019 in time for the next round of funds.

While waiting for the results, I gained permission from the Fire Service to use their lessons in local youth clubs. I have presented the anti-knife crime lesson in three youth clubs so far in knife crime vulnerable

areas. This is to bridge the possible gap in pupils not attending school so missing out on these lessons. However, I would add that data on the children not attending school but attending youth clubs is limited. I have worked to include school details on youth club attendees' feedback forms for future lessons. I will therefore be able to measure how many children I'm presenting this lesson to that wouldn't otherwise see it. I would add however, that the youth clubs were for the ages of 11-18. This is broader in the scope than the lessons provided at schools (ages 12-13 only), so may be targeting children who haven't seen this lesson before, and won't due to their age. On a positive note, the youth club lessons take no longer than 15 minutes, so while the data to support this is limited; it uses little time and is relatively cost-free.

The second strand was working with the local college. The Colchester Institute approached Essex Police in late 2017 concerned about their students' involvement in gangs. On the back of this, I did some research and could see why there were some concerns (albeit there were no defined gangs there). I learned that Colchester Institute is a college with over 3000 pupils ages 16-21 (as well as mature students). As their management were actively engaging with police, I saw an opportunity to use this to engage with and reassure students. This was also an opportunity to show students that we are robust around knife crime. Although we don't want children entering the criminal justice system unless absolutely necessary, we also want them to know that we don't take knife crime lightly to avoid them from being complacent and fearless of carrying knives.

Our new partnership was entitled Operation Jupiter. It included 1 engagement day and 2 enforcement days. For the engagement day, I suggested to management that they link in with Only Cowards Carry for lessons on knife crime. They arranged this. Our full Colchester Community Policing team attended the event. We spoke to staff and pupils to show the "friendly-face" of policing. It was particularly pertinent for us to identify safeguarding concerns of vulnerable children and young adults who may not have had good experiences with police before. Improving this relationship also attempted to improve our trust of the younger demographic. I could see from crime data that we had limited intelligence of knife crime use. By speaking to pupils, or at least giving them details of Crimestoppers, we may be able to improve intelligence. However, I knew by the very nature of intelligence, this could not be measured as I could not know the identity of informants.

The "enforcement" days were unpredictable to students. They included the use of a knife arch and a drugs dog. One sharp instrument was found and confiscated by the use of the knife arch. The student was reported for the offence. This information was then shared with the school and pupils to deter the students from carrying knives.

The success of this was measured by a focus group that I put together at the end of the three days.

Finally, with the University of Essex on Colchester's doorstep, I approached them to see if they could support us in our data analysis. I discovered the Catalyst project, a multi-million pound fund to improve

community services for young people using cutting-edge technology to predict risk and target services for vulnerable people (University of Essex, 2018). This had never been used by police. However, I realised Essex Police fit under that umbrella by having that aim and thus could apply for it. I arranged a meeting with the team and established what I wanted from this, what they wanted and how to go about doing this. Working with the Essex Police strategy team and the University of Essex, we put together a robust Data Processing Contract. The University of Essex agreed to use geodemographic analysis and compare our data on knife crime with other data sets such as deprivation. The contract was signed by senior police officers, myself and the head of the Catalyst project. The analysis will be used to support Essex Police in reducing knife crime, including evidence-based recommendations of how to do so at a local level. It will also be published in a report at the University, entitled *“Knife Crime in Essex: a scientific analytical study: A collaborative study between the Catalyst Project, University of Essex and Essex Police”*. When published, we will decide on how best to act upon the findings and recommendations. This can then be shared with other districts and forces encouraging them, using a success story (hopefully!), to work with their local University. It allows for parties to work together, using their own expertise to achieve benefits for one another and indeed, benefits for the community.

Assessment:

Unfortunately the backbone of the project, being data analysis and education, requires a long-term measurement. Violence against the person (using weapons) was reduced by 7.89%. However, it would be unjustifiable to attribute that solely to this project. It may have contributed, but crime prevention in itself is notoriously difficult to measure, though not impossible. I am exploring ways to attribute knife crime levels to this project which I hope to incorporate into the next stage of it.

No displacement of the problem has been recognised, but I am open to exploring how it could, and actively addressing that to prevent/reduce it.

Although quantifiably limited, I did receive the following feedback:

- 1) All youth club attendees who attended the knife crime lesson completed an anonymous feedback form. I collated the results and found 88% feel more confident to report knife crime to the police, teach/youth worker or parent/guardian. 94% have learned something new about knife crime. Finally, 88% would consider consequences discussed in the lesson before carrying a knife.
- 2) The focus group for Operation Jupiter received some operational learning points, which were addressed for the 2018-2019 Operation (which ran November 2018). However, feedback was predominantly good: “A majority of students feel safer and more comfortable” (Student, 2018).

On the back of the success of Operation Jupiter, this has now been shared with campuses at Braintree and Clacton-on-Sea. I shared the project with local officers who have already run the Operation in both locations in the school year 2018-2019. Furthermore, the University of Essex is currently working with Essex Police to include Operation Jupiter on their campus in 2019. This will be an evolved model, as the University is considerably larger. Nevertheless, this Operation has provided a foundation to build on.

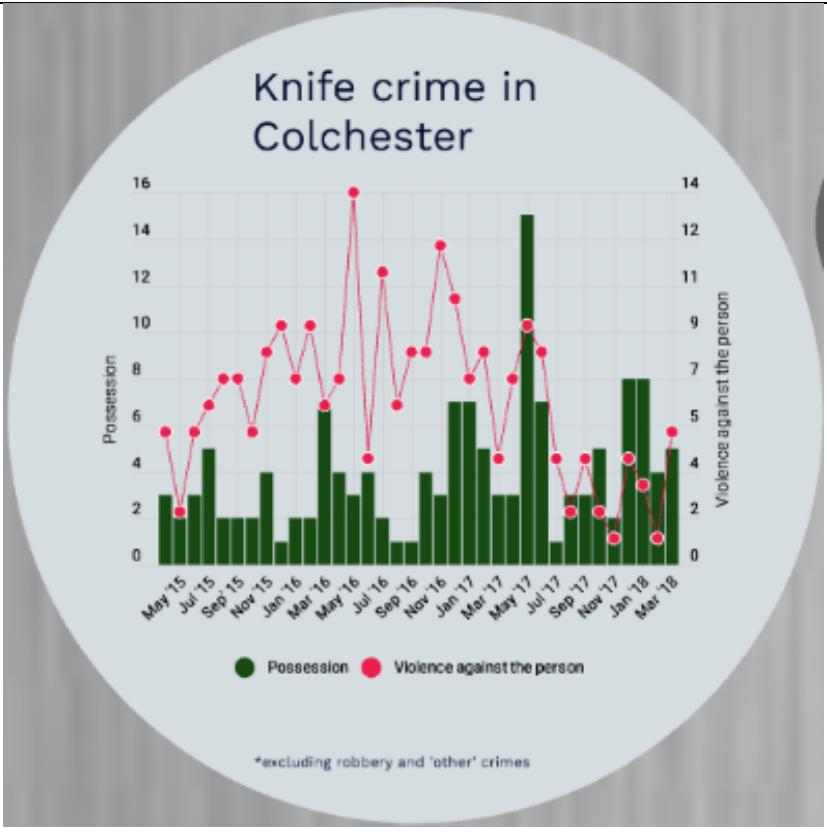
In terms of the Greenstead project, the results are expected in March 2019. I will use these results to evaluate what has worked, what hasn't and share it with other community centres in the area. Community Halls in Partnership and Colchester Borough Council are awaiting the results to share it with other Essex community centres. The latest round of funds is expected in March 2019 so the aim is to support other community centres to apply for it then.

In terms of the academic publication and data results, I was presented with an initial analysis in late summer 2018. However, I realised at this point that the data set needed broadening by the police. It had been for a 2 year range and hadn't included certain parts of the data series. The head of the Catalyst project agreed and by December 2018, an updated data-processing contract had been signed, the data set was expended by another 5 years and it included broader data. Therefore, publication has been delayed. However, given the potential of this project to truly influence the way we address local knife crime, it is important to do this well.

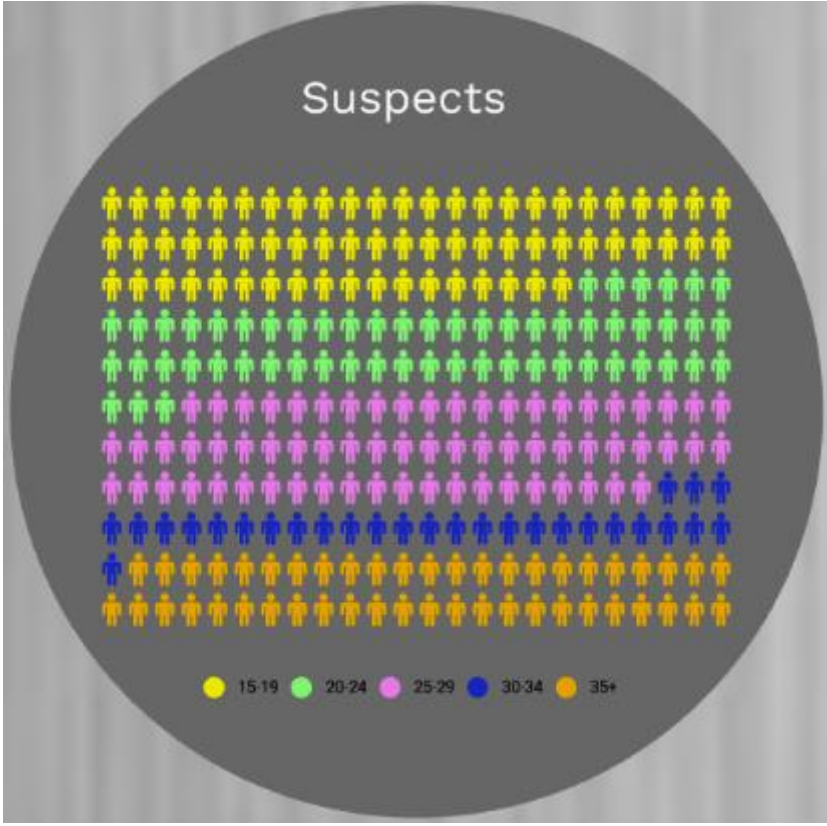
This entire project has been shared on our local project sharing software (Go2). When the results from the community centre funding and University are through, I will evaluate and share with wider forces through POLKA and Police Now.

Appendix

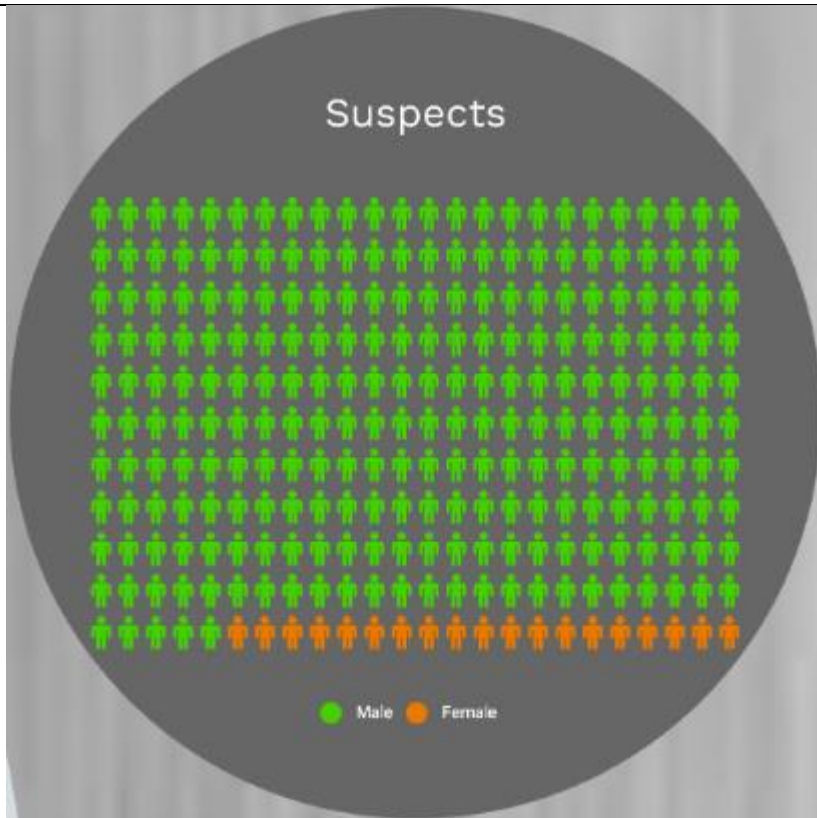
Graph 1



Graph 2



Graph 3



Number of words: 2780

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