

Today the Home Secretary has launched the government's plan to tackle violent action. Key measures include:

- * creating a presumption to prosecute those who are found carrying a knife and tougher sentences for knife crime;
- * providing the police with 100 portable knife arches and 400 search wands immediately, and making more available over the next year to ensure this technology is available where needed across the country;
- * a new £1 million campaign to challenge the 'glamour', fear and peer pressure that can drive youngsters to knife crime, and working with Be Safe to offer over 1 million young people access to workshops on the dangers of weapons;
- * investing over £20 million over the next three years to support the rollout of multi-agency interventions and information sharing, involving local police, local councils, voluntary groups and health workers, across the country to manage and identify people at risk of committing serious violence as well as providing support for victims;
- * increasing the number of Sexual Assault Referral Centres for victims of sexual violence from 19 to 48 to cover every part of the country; and
- * greater protection of children from sex offenders - including a pilot in four police force areas (Cleveland, Cambridgeshire, Hampshire and Warwickshire) to allow for the increased disclosure of child sex offenders' convictions to certain members of the public.

We have issued the following statement to the media:

Responding to the launch today of the Government's plan to tackle violent action, Jan Berry, Chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales, says:

"Police officers remain dedicated to tackling violent crime and violent offenders, but I fear that much of today's announcement is nothing more than sticking plaster solutions that do nothing to actually address the root of the problem, and the growing lawlessness and loutish behaviour we are experiencing on the streets.

"We welcome the presumption to prosecute those who are found carrying a knife, and agree there needs to be tougher sentences to deter anyone from considering such action. This is certainly better than the option being considered by the government just a year ago which would have seen those carrying knives merely getting a fixed penalty notice and not the possibility of a custodial sentence. We also congratulate Sara Payne for her persistence to ensure changes to the law to protect families from those who prey on young children. This seems a measured and sensible way forward to ensure public safety without the fear of vigilantism.

"But actions speak louder than words. If the government really want to make a difference and free police officers to tackle the most serious offences and offenders then the Home Secretary should change Public Service Agreement 24, thereby removing the Offenders Brought To Justice (OBTJ) targets, or sanction detections as they are better known. It is these targets that result in the arrests police officers are compelled to make merely to satisfy national diktats, not what the public actually want.

"In the same vain, the government should also restrict the use of Penalty Notices for Disorder to the most minor offences. We are encouraged to issue them for a range of crimes including theft, criminal damage and public order offences, and the reality is they don't deter crime and half of them are never paid. It's high time we were allowed to get back to common sense policing, using our discretion, and putting these persistent offenders before the courts. Otherwise they are just laughing in the face of the law and feel confident to go on to bigger and more serious criminal activity."