

# INFORMATION TO NORTHUMBRIA POLICE PARTNERS

For some time the Chief Constable has called for a total ban on the carrying of all pointed weapons (including knives) in public places with mandatory prison sentences for offenders.

Northumbria Police remains a safe place to live, work and visit. Knife crime is not as significant a problem in our Force area compared with other areas in the UK. However, we acknowledge public concerns and are listening to our communities and responding to their concerns.

As a result of the rising national concern over 'Knife Crime' Northumbria Police will launch a 'Knife Crime Campaign' beginning on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 2008. A press launch led by the Chief Constable will take place on Thursday the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2008. The Campaign coincides with the schools break up for summer, and the main campaign will last for six weeks followed by a period of evaluation.

## What is the 'Knife Crime Campaign'?

### PHASE 1 – Engagement and Prevention

**Knife Amnesty** – This will be a key part of the campaign providing offenders with an opportunity to legally dispose of any articles that if found in their possession may result in arrest and charge

#### Engagement with the public

- Survey – Survey of general public who will be asked about their general feelings towards knife crime in the region.
- Focus Groups – In targeted Neighbourhood Sectors, Northumbria Police will ask for opinions on the knife crime fear in that location and will be part of the 'We asked, you said, we did' initiative.

**Warnings to offenders** – a personal visit and letter will be given to identified offenders of knife crime warning them as to the consequences of further offending

We will work closely with our partners to combat crime. The Chief Constable will also write to courts outlining the initiative and seeking their support through robust action.

**Retailers** - Northumbria Police will send a letter to retail groups across the Force with a view to advising them that shops remove knives from on-street display. A letter will be forwarded to each store advising of the initiative and their responsibilities.

## **PHASE 2 – Enforcement**

This phase of the campaign will follow directly on from the engagement stage in that offenders will have been given the opportunity to address their behaviour and if they are stopped, searched and found to be in possession of a knife without lawful excuse will be arrested and dealt with in a robust manner.

**Targeted locations** – Areas identified through intelligence will be subject of at least one proactive stop and search led operation supported by metal detecting equipment. Any location which experiences a positive search during this time will be subject to a further operation of the same nature during the enforcement phase. Major events such as football matches at St James Park and Stadium of Light will also be targeted for specific knife related interventions.

**Retail Initiative** – Area Commands will carry out checks on stores identified as selling hunting/fishing style knives to see if they are still displayed in windows. Where this is still the case, officers should again advise the stores of their responsibilities. Further action will be taken by Area Commands where appropriate.

## **PHASE 3 – Evaluation and Communication**

We will evaluate what the real view of knife crime is in the region and also how the campaign impacted upon this.

We will update you on the evaluation and success of the 'Knife Crime Campaign' however the number of arrests may well increase due to the heightened police activity and public awareness.

Northumbria Police is taking robust action against offenders in order to send out a clear message that these offences have no place in our society. In support of the Chief Constables determination to tackle violent crime vigorously, the criminal possession of knives will be dealt with in a robust manner. Anyone found carrying a knife can be charged with an offence that carries a sentence of up to 4 yrs in prison.

Northumbria Police does not have the same problems of knife crime as some other parts of the country – help us to keep it that way.

**We need the help of the whole community to address this problem and we urge anyone who has information about knife crime to come forward. You can also use the Crimestoppers reporting line to relay information to the force.**