

Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) Phase I: Overview of key trends from a monitoring programme

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The Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) aimed to reduce the carrying of knives, related homicides and serious stabbings among teenagers (aged 13-19) in ten police force areas. A range of local police enforcement, education and prevention interventions were implemented.

A monitoring programme collected management information from a range of sources both before and during the 'TKAP period' (July 2008 to March 2009). Given the provisional nature of some of the data, the lack of statistically robust comparison groups, the dominance of the overall trend by the largest forces, and the potential impact of non-TKAP initiatives, a degree of caution needs to be applied when interpreting these trends and attributing change directly to TKAP.

Key findings relating to the TKAP period (compared to the same period in the previous year) are as follows:

- The provisional number of TKAP stop and searches increased across all ten areas following the start of TKAP and there was a (13%) reduction in the number of recorded offensive weapon offences among people aged 19 and under, compared with an increase (8%) among those aged 20 and over.
- There was no change in the number of provisionally recorded sharp-instrument related homicides among victims aged 19 and under in TKAP areas, and a slight increase among victims aged 20 and over.
- TKAP sharp-instrument 'all violence' offences decreased (by 17%) for victims aged 19 and under. A less marked reduction (8%) was also noted for victims aged 20 years and over.
- The number of sharp-instrument robbery offences reduced (by 13%) for victims aged 19 and under, compared with an (11%) increase in victims aged 20 years and over.
- Building on earlier reductions, there was a provisional 32 per cent decrease in admissions to hospitals for assault with a sharp object among victims aged 19 and under in English TKAP areas, compared with an 18 per cent drop in non-TKAP areas. The fall in the target age group in TKAP areas was more marked than among admissions aged 20 and over, where there was a five per cent reduction.
- In line with national sentencing guidance, provisional figures indicate that tougher penalties were being administered for possession of knives or other offensive weapons offences across England and Wales in all age groups. The average custodial sentence length for these offences also increased.

These findings are encouraging, suggesting that fewer young people are becoming victims of knife crime. While caution must be applied when interpreting these trends, TKAP may well have contributed to a decline in some measures and persisting reductions in others.

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Keywords

Knife crime	Young people
Offensive weapons	Young offenders
Weapons	Crime reduction
Serious Violence	Performance monitoring
Fear of crime	

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