

News story: Minister supports police action to tackle knife crime

The Home Office hosted an event for police forces across the country to try to break the cycle of knife crime.

At the briefing, minister Sarah Newton encouraged more forces to join the Operation Sceptre week of co-ordinated police action on knife crime in July.

There are currently 29 police forces expected to take part, the largest number since it launched 2 years ago.

Sarah Newton MP, The Minister for Vulnerability, Safeguarding and Countering Extremism said:

Knife crime has devastating effects on victims, families and communities. I am hugely encouraged that a record 29 forces have signed up to be part of next month's Operation Sceptre and I hope more join in the next couple of weeks.

We must break this cycle of violence and address the perception of young people who say they need to carry a knife to protect themselves. Let me be clear – knives have no place on our streets – and the Government is committed to working with the police to tackle this issue.

Operation Sceptre is an ongoing series of weeks of intensified action on knife crime, including targeted stop and searches, weapon sweeps, test purchases of knives from retailers, and the use of surrender bins. During a previous week of the operation in October 2016:

- 21 police forces across the country took part
- more than 1,200 weapons were seized
- more than 300 arrests were made
- more than 720 knives were placed in amnesty bins

The event at the Home Office was held in conjunction with the National Police Chiefs Council and the Metropolitan Police. In a speech to attendees, Sarah Newton set out the government's approach to tackling knife crime. This approach included:

- working closely with police and law enforcement, including by supporting Operation Sceptre
- tightening the legislative framework, for example through the introduction of mandatory minimum custodial sentences for repeat convictions and a ban on zombie knives
- working with retailers to prevent the sale of knives to under 18s
- promoting and providing early intervention by working with voluntary

sector organisations

The minister stressed that she is keen to support and encourage initiatives that work directly with young people. She also highlighted that a mix of agencies working together is key to tackling the issues around knife crime.

The next Operation Sceptre week of action will begin on 17 July.