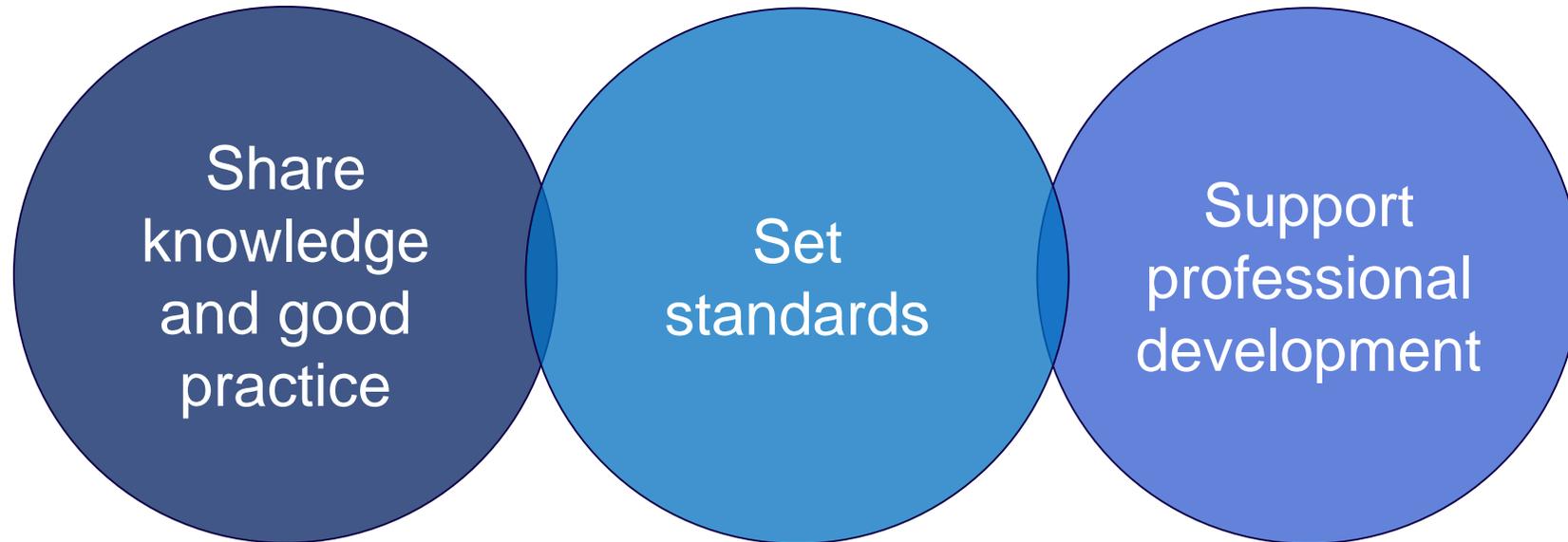# The evidence base for tackling knife crime

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6th February 2020

# The College's role

**The independent professional body supporting everyone working in policing to reduce crime and keep people safe.**

Share knowledge and good practice

Set standards

Support professional development

# Research evidence - summary

| Tailored approaches to specific problems | Focussed deterrence and early intervention | Multi-agency and multi-faceted solutions |
| --- | --- | --- |

# What is knife crime?

- 'Knife crime' is defined as any offence that satisfies both of the following criteria:

  - homicide, attempted murder, assault with intent to cause harm, assault with injury, threats to kill, sexual offences (including rape) and robbery;
  - Where a knife or sharp instrument has been used to injure, used as a threat, or the victim was convinced a knife was present during the offence.

- 'Knife Carrying' / Possession

  - It is classed as a possession offence for a person to have with them in any public place or school premises any offensive weapon without "lawful authority or reasonable excuse".
  - An "offensive weapon" is defined as "any article made or adapted for use for causing injury to the person".

Total violent and sexual offences involving a knife or sharp instrument recorded by the police
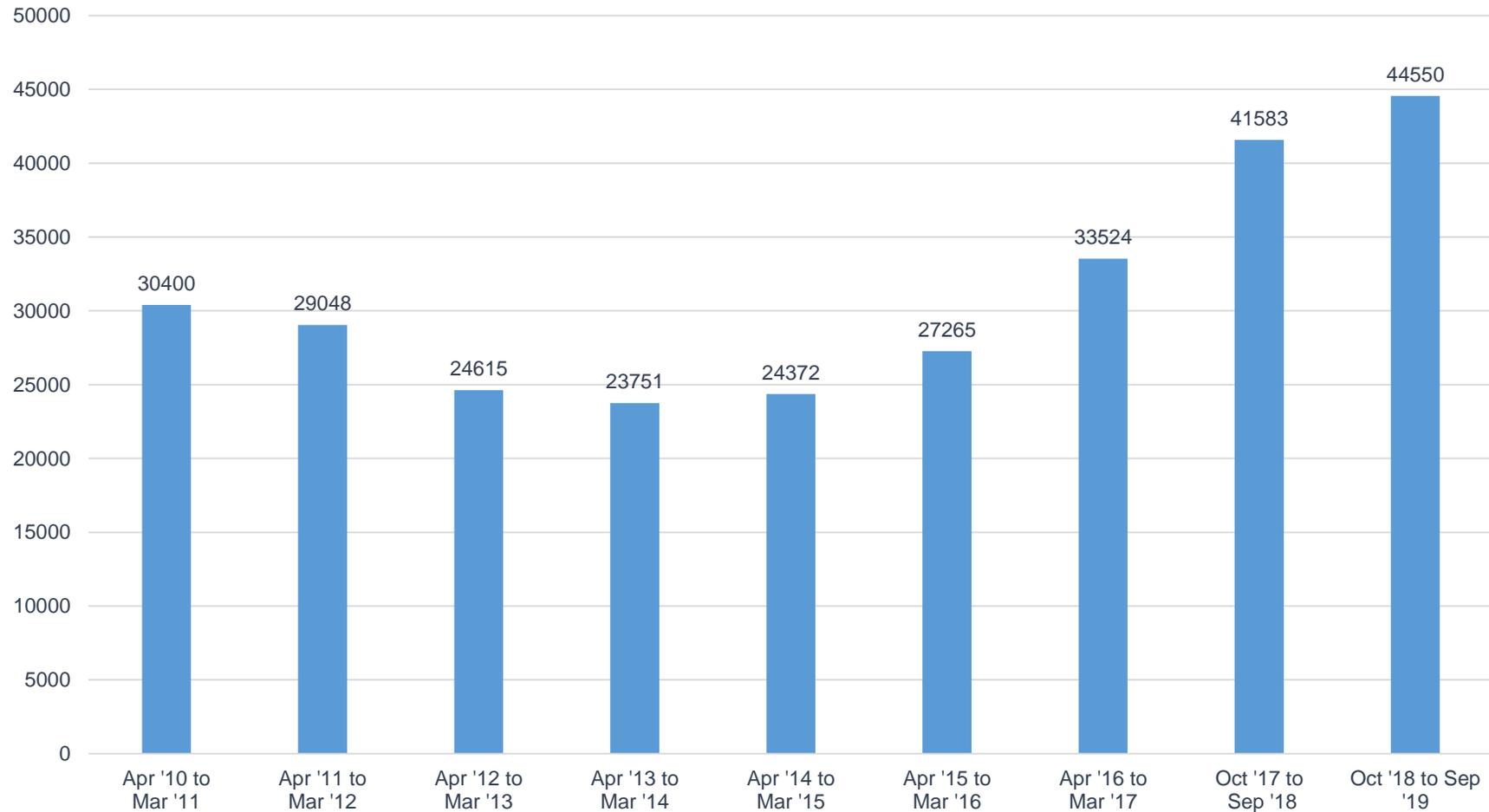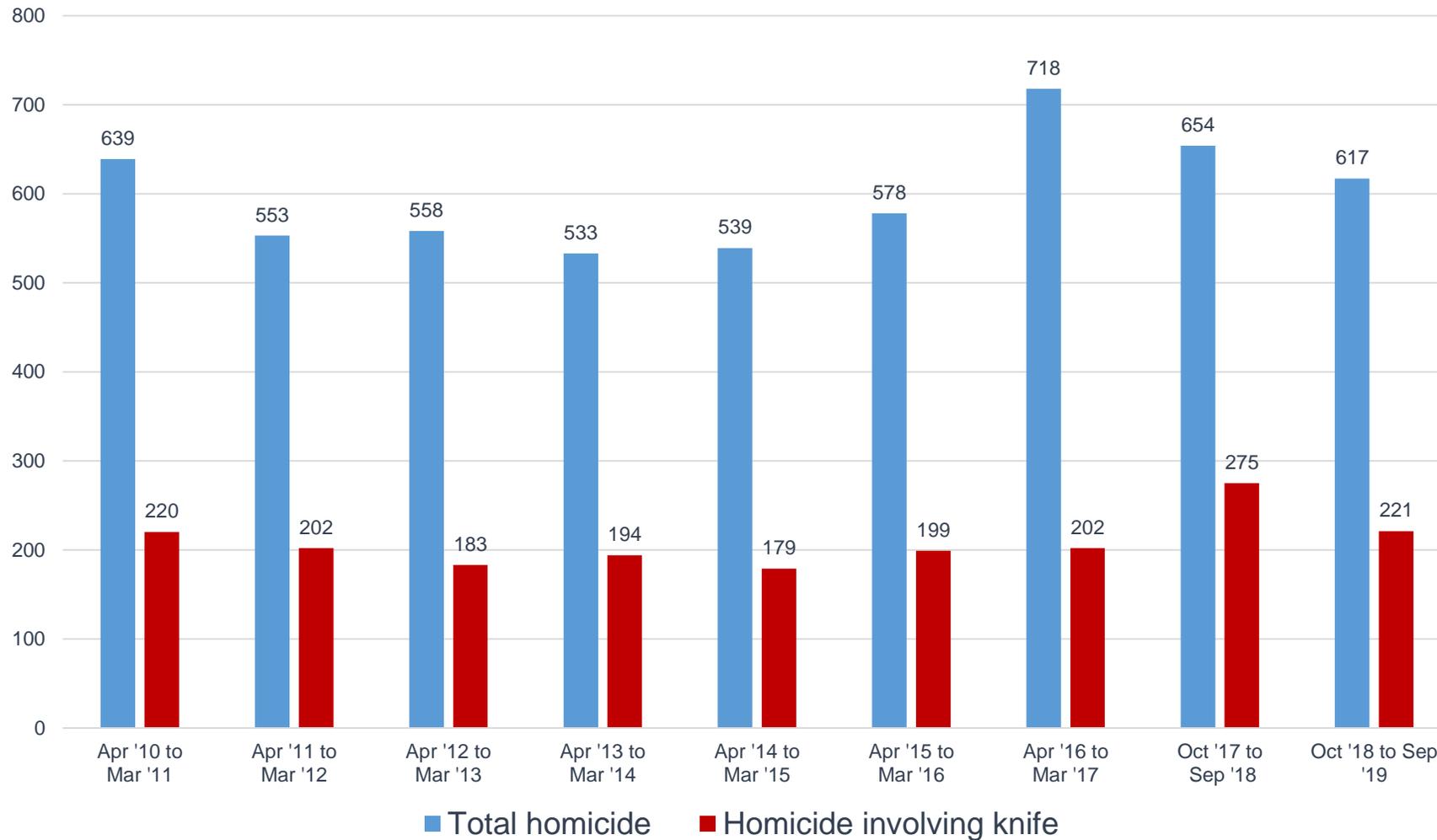
Source: Home Office - Police recorded crime. England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police)

Total possession of an article with a blade or point offences
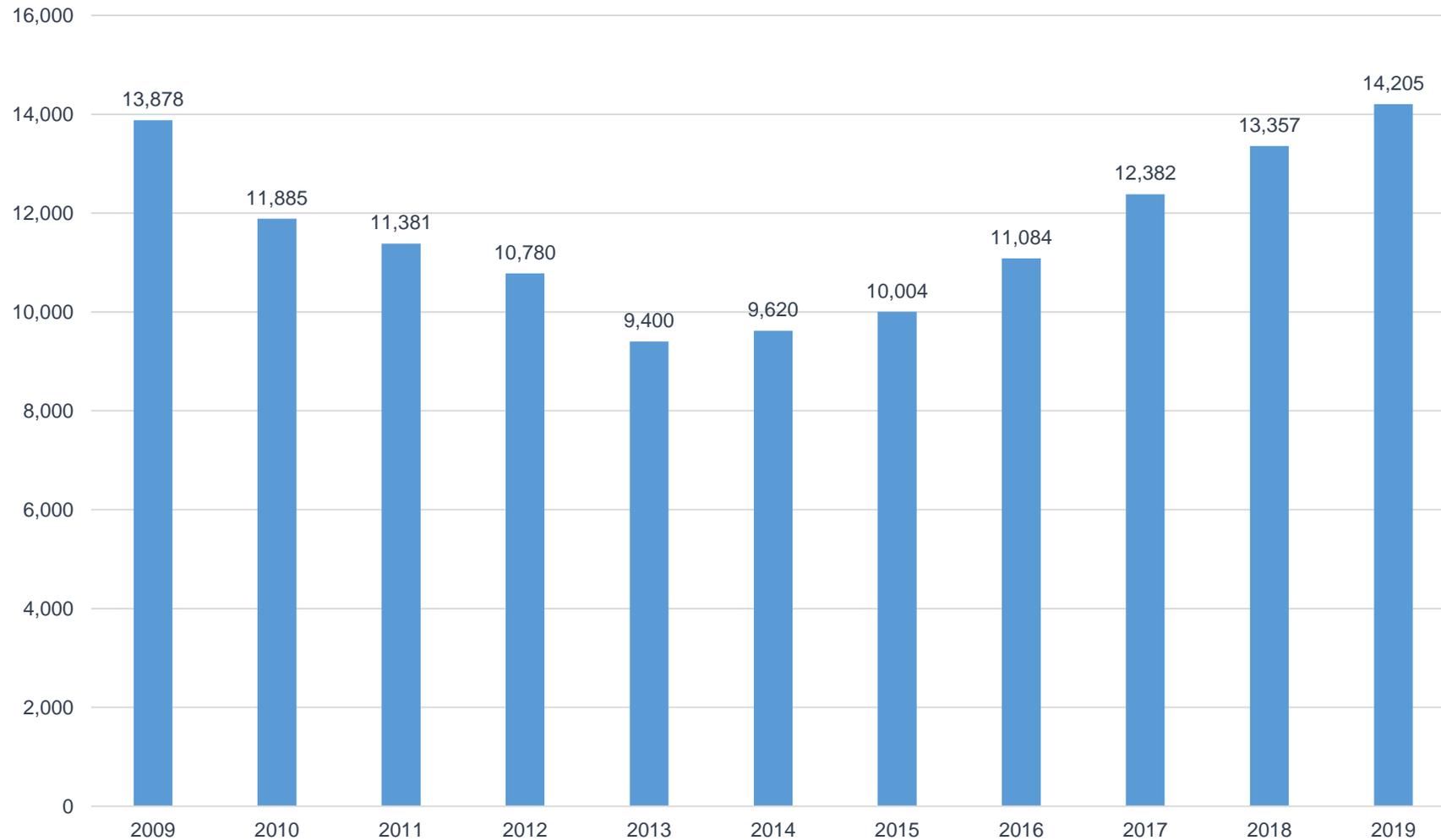
Source: Ministry of Justice, Knife and Offensive Weapon Sentencing Quarterly, England and Wales. Year ending June.

Total homicides and those involving a knife

Source: Home Office - Police recorded crime. England and Wales (excluding Greater Manchester Police)

# Motivations

for weapon carrying have broadly been categorized in three ways…

- **Self protection and fear** are particularly significant motivations for individuals who have prior experience of victimisation, and may be characterised as 'defensive' weapon-carrying;

- **Self-presentation** is perceived to play an important role for individuals who seek to conjure notions of 'street credibility' and 'respect' where they perceive a lack of access to status symbols;

- **Utility** motivates those who use weapons to facilitate other behaviours, we may characterize this as 'offensive' weapon-carrying.

# Risk factors

There is some evidence that the following **risk factors** may be associated with increased risk of violence and/or weapon carrying…

- **Gender** - males are more likely to commit serious violence and carry weapons

- **Age** - self-reported weapon carrying peaks around the age of fifteen

- **Adverse childhood experiences** – including abuse, neglect, parental criminality and/or substance abuse, being taken into care

- **Educational attainment** – school exclusion and low attainment

- **Ethnicity** – recent analysis of data collected in the UK indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship between ethnicity and weapon carrying

# Interventions with the greatest potential

**Focussed deterrence**

A comprehensive problem solving approach - **'Pulling levers'**

- targets <span style="color:red">prolific or repeat offenders</span>, combining improved access to support with strict enforcement (sometimes called a 'carrot and stick' approach).

Successful implementation of these types of approaches involves:

- **multi-agency working** involving a range of partners including law enforcement, social services and community-based practitioners;
- **analytical work** to identify key offenders, groups, and behaviour patterns;
- developing a response to offenders that uses a **variety of interventions**, both access to services and support, and criminal justice processes - 'pulling levers'
- **directly and repeatedly communicating with offenders** to make them understand why they are receiving this special attention.

# Interventions with the greatest potential

**Early intervention and prevention programmes**

A range of programmes show positive effects.

- Target 'at risk' young people to change norms and values towards violence at a young age

Early intervention programmes that have shown promising effects include:

- **child skills training** – teaching social and emotional skills, problem solving and anger management
- **behavioural parent training** – supporting parents to reinforce good behaviour
- **mentoring** – with an emphasis on emotional support and role modelling
- **after school recreational activities** – teaching skills in a structured and supervised environment.

| Intervention ▲▼ | Impact on crime ▲▼ | How it works ▲▼ | Where it works ▲▼ | How to do it ▲▼ | What it costs ▲▼ | |
| | Effect | Mechanism | Moderator | Implementation | Economic cost | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aggression Replacement Training (ART) for reducing antisocial behaviour** | ✗✓ ▪▪▫▫ | ⚙ ▪▪▫▫ | ◉ ▪▫▫▫ | ? ▫▫▫▫ | £ ▫▫▫▫ | 📌 |
| **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) for Domestic Violence** | ✓ ▪▫▫▫ | ⚙ ▪▫▫▫ | ◉ ▪▫▫▫ | ? ▪▫▫▫ | £ ▫▫▫▫ | 📌 |
| **Domestic abuse sanctions** | ✗✓ ▪▫▫▫ | ⚙ ▪▪▫▫ | ◉ ▪▪▫▫ | ? ▫▫▫▫ | £ ▫▫▫▫ | 📌 |
| **Limiting alcohol sales** | ✗✓ ▪▪▫▫ | ⚙ ▫▫▫▫ | ◉ ▫▫▫▫ | ? ▫▫▫▫ | £ ▫▫▫▫ | 📌 |
| **Relationship violence education** | ✓ ▪▪▪▫ | ⚙ ▪▪▫▫ | ◉ ▪▪▫▫ | ? ▪▪▫▫ | £ ▫▫▫▫ | 📌 |
| **Second response to domestic abuse** | ✓ ▪▪▪▫ | ⚙ ▪▫▫▫ | ◉ ▪▫▫▫ | ? ▪▫▫▫ | £ ▫▫▫▫ | 📌 |
| **Youth curfews** | ✗✓ ▪▪▪▫ | ⚙ ▪▫▫▫ | ◉ ▫▫▫▫ | ? ▫▫▫▫ | £ ▫▫▫▫ | 📌 |

# Evidence gaps

**Multi-agency approaches**

- Testing of focussed deterrence in a UK/ E&W context
- Testing the impact of "public health" interventions on serious violence in the UK/ E&W

**Building on limited existing evidence**

- Stop and search in violence hot spots
- Knife bins and knife amnesties
- Local community and educational interventions
- Publication of knife crime images

**Generating evidence in new areas**

Overall lack of evidence in relation to different tactical approaches, e.g.

- Weapons sweeps
- Age restrictions on knife purchases
- Targeting Habitual Knife Carriers

# Vulnerability and violent crime programme

**Objectives**

- **Creation of new evidence** to support policing to tackle high priority areas such as protecting vulnerable people, or to support a strategic shift to the prevention of both crime and non-crime related demand.

- The **implementation of initiatives that 'work'** at the local and National level **is accelerated**, particularly in the area of vulnerability.

- **Use of evidence based approaches** in professional practice **are embedded** within policing culture.

# Call for practice
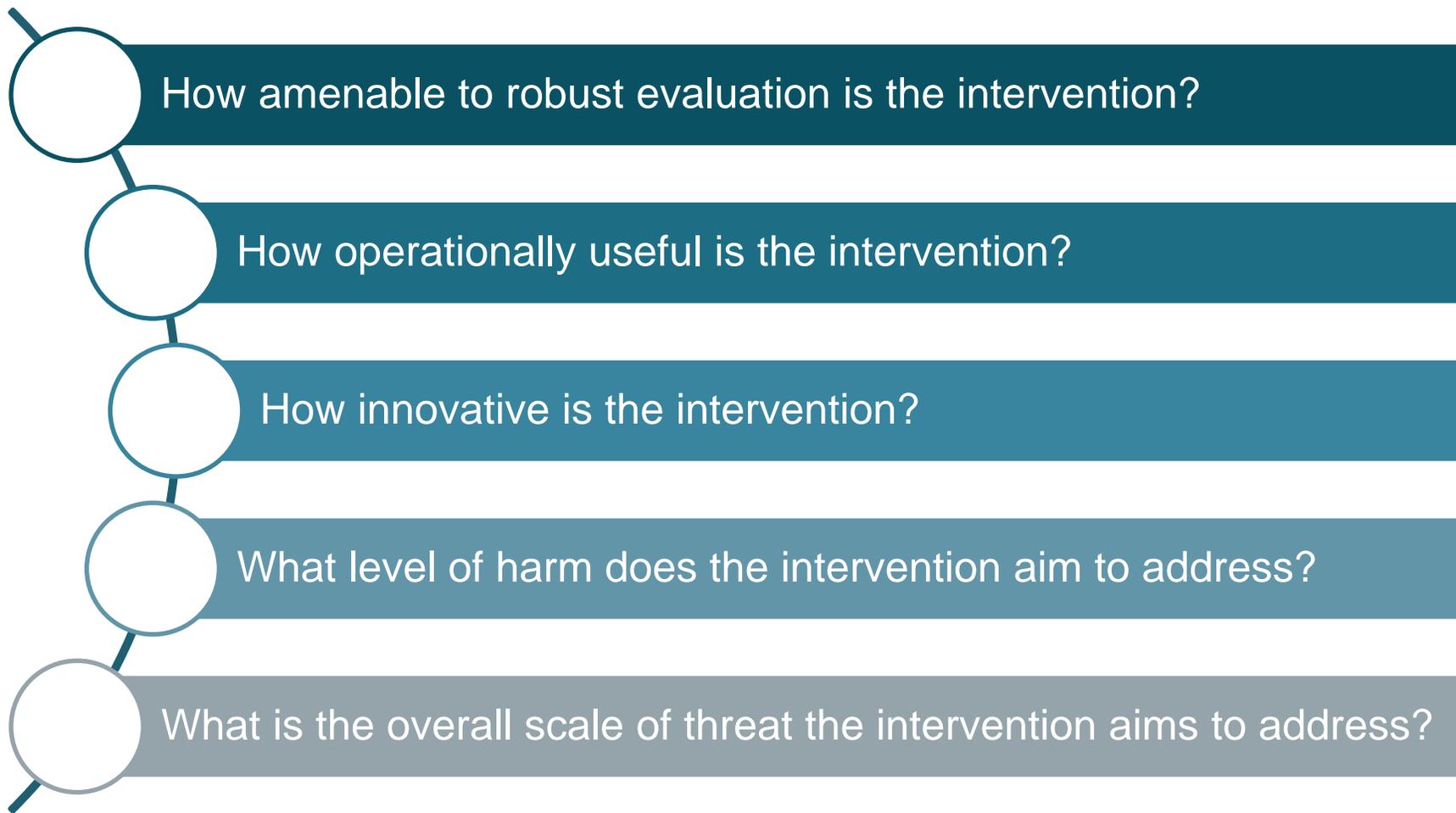
- How amenable to robust evaluation is the intervention?
- How operationally useful is the intervention?
- How innovative is the intervention?
- What level of harm does the intervention aim to address?
- What is the overall scale of threat the intervention aims to address?
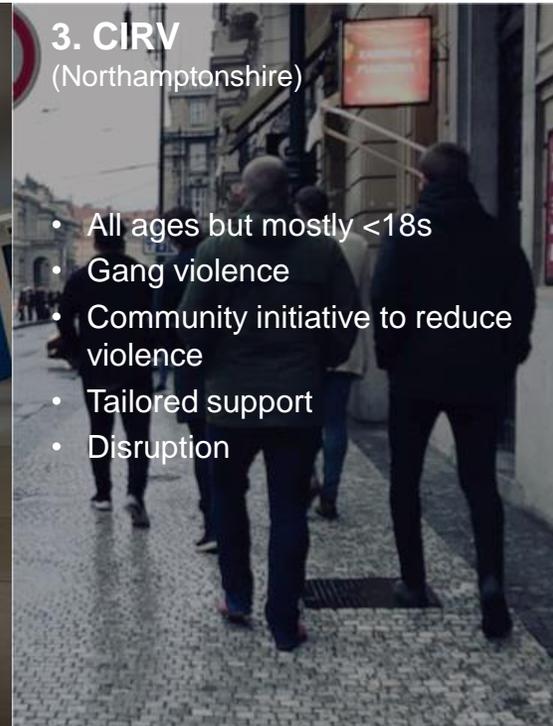
# Gangs and Youth Violence
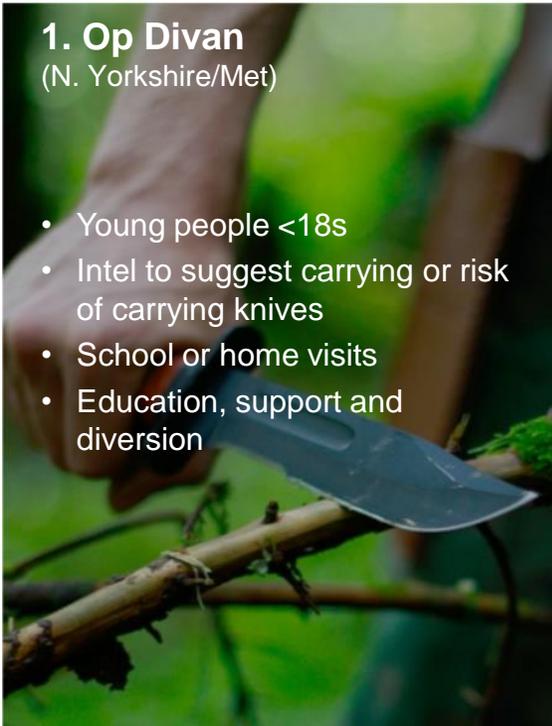
**1. Op Divan**
(N. Yorkshire/Met)

- Young people <18s
- Intel to suggest carrying or risk of carrying knives
- School or home visits
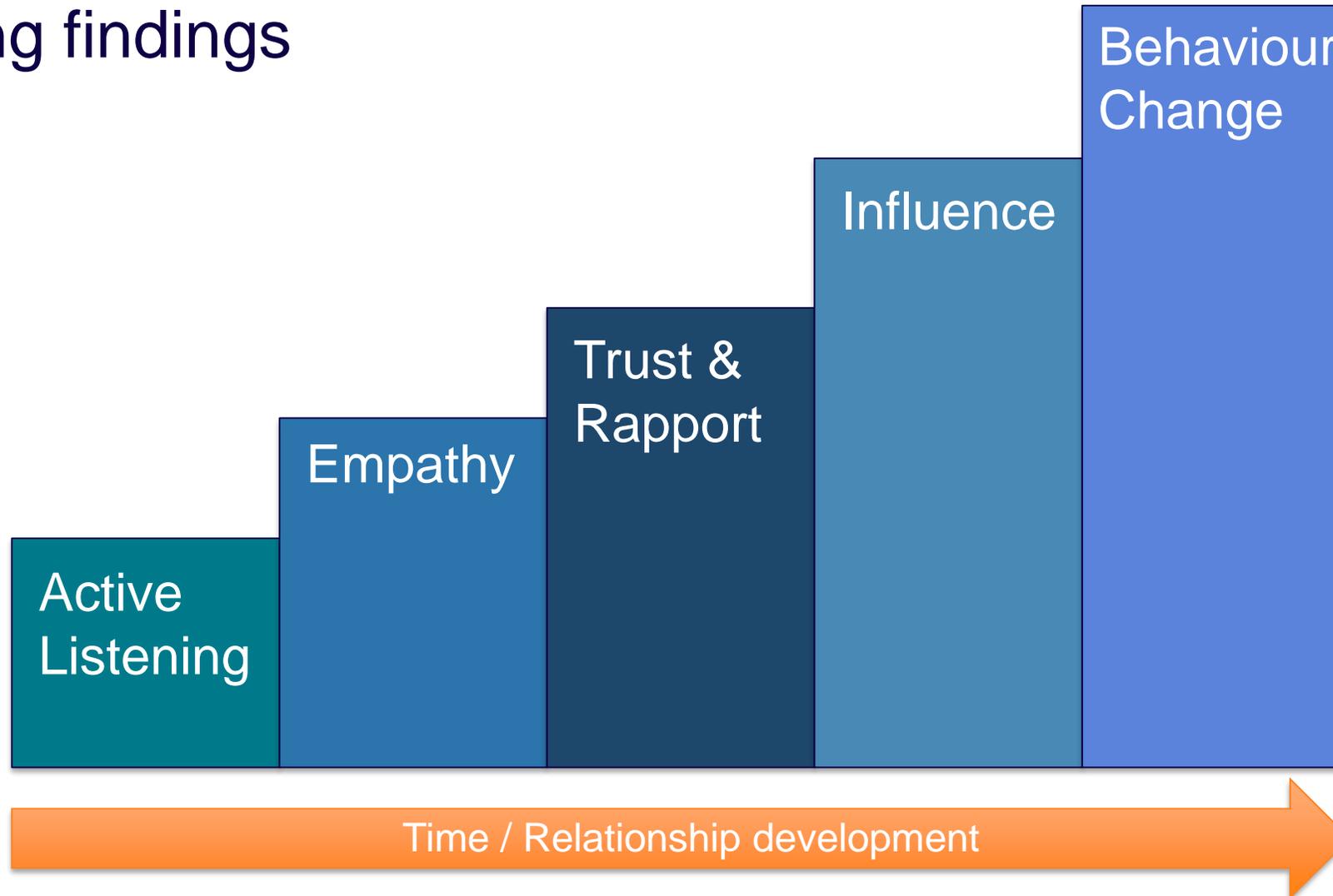- Education, support and diversion
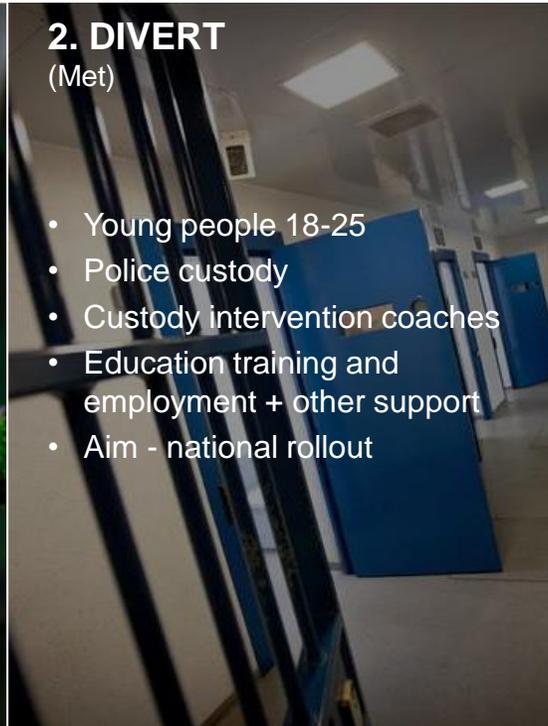
**2. DIVERT**
(Met)

- Young people 18-25
- Police custody
- Custody intervention coaches
- Education training and employment + other support
- Aim - national rollout

**3. CIRV**
(Northamptonshire)

- All ages but mostly <18s
- Gang violence
- Community initiative to reduce violence
- Tailored support
- Disruption

# Emerging findings



Behaviour Change

Influence

Trust & Rapport

Empathy

Active Listening

Time / Relationship development

Source: Behaviour Change Stairway Model, FBI

# Conclusions / Implications

Be specific

Evaluate

Collaborate

Resources (these are links)

[Knife Crime Briefing](#)

[Crime Reduction Toolkit](#)

[Vulnerability and Violent Crime Programme](#)

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