

REQUEST

Dear Mr Khan

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT (FoI) REQUEST Announced Increase in Stop & Search to Combat Knife Crime

Race Equality Matters (REM) is a network of policy experts, lawyers, academics, journalists and campaigners who have come together to promote race equality and good race relations. As such one of our key concerns is race disproportionality in police use of stop and search powers. There continues to be a lack of clarity on how much of this is justifiable and how much is unlawfully discriminatory. However, we believe there is less doubt on the damage it does to police/community relations and to intelligence about offending from communities, which could also lead to breaches of the public sector equality duty.

We were therefore concerned to learn of your announcement in January and would ask for clarification of the following points:

1. Does the announced increase apply to stops and searches under s.60 of the Public Order Act (POA), or 'reasonable grounds' stops and searches under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and other statutes (PACE etc), or both?
2. Is the increase confined to certain boroughs and if so which ones?
3. What percentage increase is anticipated of POA stops and searches and/or PACE etc stops and searches across the boroughs concerned, and across the Metropolitan Police District?
4. If PACE etc stops and searches feature in the increase, how do you propose to increase the number of encounters where officers genuinely have 'reasonable grounds to suspect' the possession of a knife? Do officers not already stop and search everyone they encounter where they have such grounds?
5. If POA stops and searches feature in the increase, what safeguards has the Metropolitan Police Service put in place to counter the extreme race disproportionality associated with this power where there are no constraints on officer discretion?

Please will you supply a copy of any written instructions that have been given to officers about the increase?

6. When the decision about the increase was made were you aware of the Home Office research project that evaluated Operation Blunt 2 (which ran from May 2008 to April 2011, using increased stop and search to combat knife crime) ***'Do initiatives involving substantial increases in stop and search reduce crime? Assessing the impact of Operation Blunt 2' (March 2016)***?
7. In particular, were you aware of its headline conclusion that *"Although there were several elements to Operation BLUNT 2, a central part was the increase in the use of weapons searches in ten priority London boroughs. The analysis compares changes*

*in crime in those boroughs with comparison boroughs, to establish whether there was a crime-reducing effect from the surge in stop and search.
No statistically significant effects on crime were found at the borough level.”*

8. If so, why did you conclude that another increase in stop and search now would have a different outcome?

I look forward to hearing from you

RESPONSE

Thank you for your Freedom of Information request of 11 March and apologise for the delay in replying to you. I confirm that your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and that MOPAC does hold some information relating to your request as set out below.

1. Does the announced increase apply to stops and searches under s.60 of the Public Order Act (POA), or ‘reasonable grounds’ stops and searches under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and other statutes (PACE etc), or both?

How officers deploy is an operational matter for the Metropolitan Police.

2. Is the increase confined to certain boroughs and if so which ones?

As above at 1.

3. What percentage increase is anticipated of POA stops and searches and/or PACE etc stops and searches across the boroughs concerned, and across the Metropolitan Police District?

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4. If PACE etc stops and searches feature in the increase, how do you propose to increase the number of encounters where officers genuinely have ‘reasonable grounds to suspect’ the possession of a knife? Do officers not already stop and search everyone they encounter where they have such grounds?

As above at 1.

5. If POA stops and searches feature in the increase, what safeguards has the Metropolitan Police Service put in place to counter the extreme race disproportionality associated with this power where there are no constraints on officer discretion?

Please will you supply a copy of any written instructions that have been given to officers about the increase?

This is an operational matter.

The issue of disproportionality is well understood ([Link to Justice Matters on this subject](#))

6. When the decision about the increase was made were you aware of the Home Office research project that evaluated Operation Blunt 2 (which ran from May 2008 to April 2011, using increased stop and search to combat knife crime) ***'Do initiatives involving substantial increases in stop and search reduce crime? Assessing the impact of Operation Blunt 2' (March 2016)?***

MOPAC was aware of this research.

7. In particular, were you aware of its headline conclusion that *"Although there were several elements to Operation BLUNT 2, a central part was the increase in the use of weapons searches in ten priority London boroughs. The analysis compares changes in crime in those boroughs with comparison boroughs, to establish whether there was a crime-reducing effect from the surge in stop and search. No statistically significant effects on crime were found at the borough level."*

As Above

8. If so, why did you conclude that another increase in stop and search now would have a different outcome?

This matter has been fully examined at the Justice Matters meeting which concerned the use of stop and search. ([Link to Justice Matters](#))

If you are unhappy with the response to your Freedom of Information request, please see the MOPAC website on what the next steps are at:

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/mayors-office-policing-and-crime-mopac/governance-and-decision-making/freedom-information>