

## Gun crime in London

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### Background

The number of gun crime offences in London fell significantly between 2010 and 2015. But in the last two years it has started to rise again. Although recorded offences remain lower than in 2010, it is nonetheless important to understand why they have started to rise again and how the Met is responding, particularly in light of the Commissioner's comments about prioritising violent crime.

#### The Met's definition of gun crime

The Met publishes two gun related offences figures; gun crime and gun crime with discharged firearm.

**Gun crime:** falls within the four major offence categories of: Violence Against the Person, Sexual Offences, Robbery, and Burglary - and - a feature code identifying a firearm usage has been added to the crime report<sup>1</sup> - and - the firearm used is not CS gas or pepper spray.

Or

The offence is one of Possession of Firearms with Intent, where the firearm involved is not CS gas or pepper spray.

**Gun crime with discharged firearm:** All offences of gun crime where a firearm has been fired.

**Gun crime sanction detection rate (SDR):** This is a percentage of all gun crime sanction detections out of all gun crime offences.<sup>2</sup>

#### Level of gun crime in London

Since 2015 there has been a sharp rise in gun crime offences in London. 2,493 gun crime offences were recorded in the year to February 2017, compared to 1,625 in the year to February 2015.

The Met specifically records a subset of gun crime offences where a firearm has been discharged. Firearm discharges have followed a similar pattern to overall gun crime. In the year to February 2010 there were 719 offences, compared to a low of 268 offences in the year to February 2016. But in the year to February 2017 there were 317 recorded offences: an 18 per cent increase against the previous year.

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<sup>1</sup> Firearm feature codes identify gun crime if:

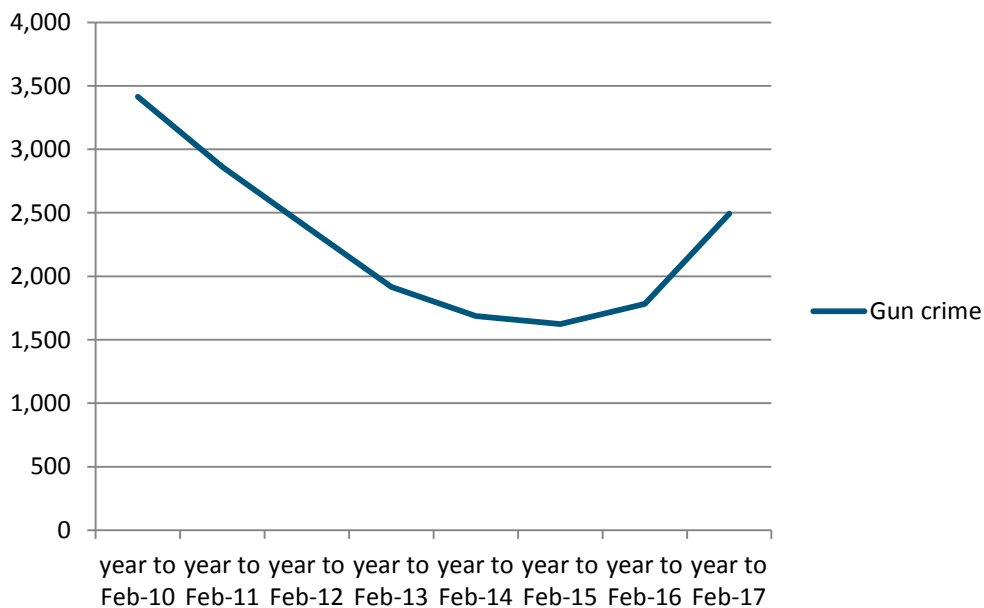
- a. A firearm is seen during the offence
- b. Physical evidence such as bullet, injury or damage is found at the scene that a victim, witness or police officer believes was caused by a firearm
- c. An object is presented as a firearm but obscured e.g. in a bag or pocket
- d. A firearm is intimated and the victim is convinced of the presence of a firearm.

<sup>2</sup> Sanction Detection Rate is the percentage total number of detections out of the total number of offences. A 'Sanction Detection' is the term used for police-generated detections (term used for resolved cases) as opposed to those resolved through administrative means. It is assumed that the accused receives a punishment or 'sanction' from the police. Sanction Detections include cases where an accused person is: charged, cautioned, summonsed, has offences taken in to consideration (TIC), issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice (e.g. Cannabis, retail theft), given a formal warning for cannabis possession.

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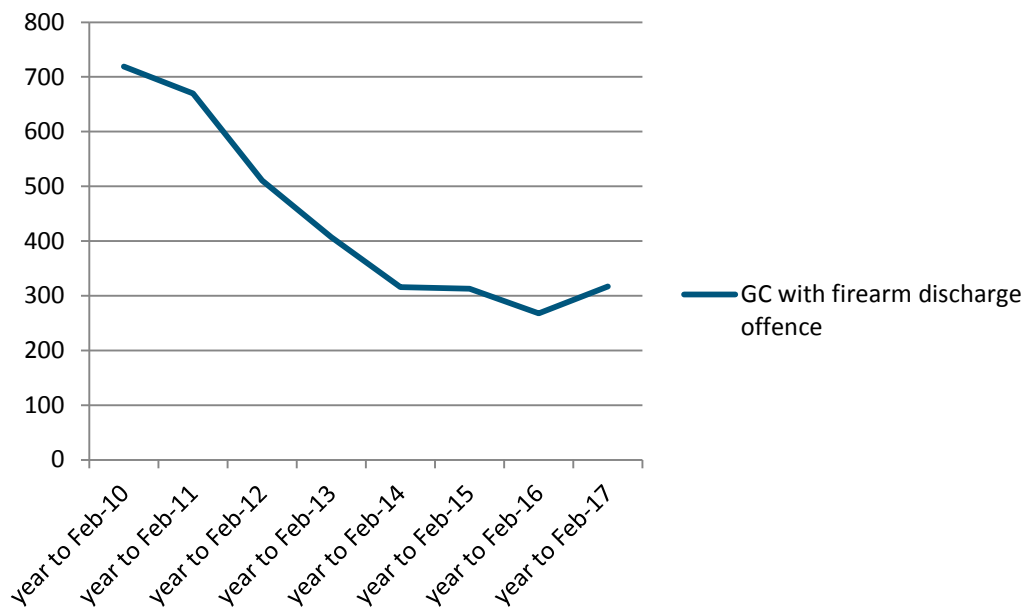
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**Chart 1: Gun crime offences fell significantly between 2010 and 2015, but are now rising again**



Source: London Datastore

**Chart 2: Gun crime with firearm discharge have risen in the past year**



Source: London Datastore

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### Drivers of gun crime

Little is known about the drivers of gun crime in the capital. In September 2016, the previous Commissioner, Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, offered some insights into the Met's thinking on the drivers of increased gun crime. He said that the Met believed the "most likely cause is a higher level of supply for firearms" and that the "supply is changing". He went on to say that in the previous year (2015) the Met had "seized more firearms than ever before": 714 guns, which is around two per day.<sup>3</sup>

In June 2016, Deputy Commissioner Craig Mackey told the Police and Crime Committee that the Met was testing a number of hypotheses:

"Are there more firearms out there? Are there more firearms in circulation? Sadly, there is no national register that we can helpfully go to. We have to use a lot of proxy indicators to work it out. Is there more prevalence of people exchanging firearms with each other? Have those firearms always been there, are they the sort of thing that people have hidden or stashed away and for some reason a tension has arisen and there is a greater opportunity to do it? Are we getting more multiple discharges when weapons are fired more than once? There is a prevalence of those. There are a number of potential scenarios around it."<sup>4</sup>

### The Met's response

Operationally, the Met has responded to the rise in gun crime with the establishment, in May 2016, of Operation Viper.<sup>5</sup> Viper is led by Trident and Gang Crime Command and consists of:

- a team of 50 officers from the Serious and Organised Crime Command
- uniformed officers from boroughs
- the Task Force, including the Territorial Support Group and the Dogs Unit
- an armed response unit from the Force Firearms Unit

Operation Viper activities include high-visibility armed patrols, pro-active ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) operations, weapon sweeps, and "intelligence-led stop and search." Viper teams also assist in educating young people about the dangers of carrying firearms. Viper officers are deployed into "priority boroughs": currently Hackney, Lambeth, Southwark, Brent, Newham and Tower Hamlets.

In February 2017, the Police and Crime Committee questioned the Deputy Commissioner about the effectiveness of the Met's recent firearms surrender and #giveupyourgun campaign.<sup>6</sup> He explained that the #giveupyourgun campaign was particularly targeted at those that may be holding a gun for a gang member. On the impact of firearms surrenders, he said that "it is very

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<sup>3</sup> [MOPAC Policing Matters](#) – Performance, 28 September 2016

<sup>4</sup> [PCC Q&A](#), 29 June 2016

<sup>5</sup> [Operation launched to halt the rise in gun crime](#), Metropolitan Police Service, May 2016

<sup>6</sup> In a gun surrender, all weapons will go through analysis in order to check whether they are linked to any crimes.

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hard to make a direct correlation other than the one that is probably the most obvious: it is the availability of weapons that lead to the increased level of discharges".<sup>7</sup>

### ***Priority for the new Commissioner***

The new Commissioner has indicated that serious violence, including gun and knife crime, are likely to be key priorities for the Met going forward. Speaking recently about the rise in gun and knife crime offences, the Commissioner said that:

"I'm not sure we can be sure it's a trend. But if it is the case that gun crime and knife crime is going up, then that's of huge concern to me, and it will mark out my commissionership trying to bear down on violence in general and those two crimes in particular."<sup>8</sup>

The Commissioner has also said she is prepared to increase the use of intelligence-led stop and search to prevent violent crime.<sup>9</sup>

### **Role of the Mayor and the GLA**

One of the aims in the Mayor's Police and Crime Plan is to reduce the number of gun crimes (including discharges). The Plan states that the Met will continue to work to disrupt the supply of firearms and bring those that use them to justice.

Additionally, the plan commits MOPAC to support the Met to tackle gang crime, gun crime and knife crime more effectively in London through reviewing the MPS approach to gang crime, including the Gangs Matrix, and working with MPS Trident to strengthen the identification of young people who are at risk of serious youth violence. Reducing gun crime has been identified as a local priority for every borough.

## The investigation

### **Proposed terms of reference**

1. To assess the extent and nature of gun crime in London
2. To consider the possible drivers associated with the rise in gun crime offences in London
3. To examine the Met's response to the rise in gun crime offences and learn from previous successes
4. To examine how MOPAC can further support the Met and partners to reduce gun crime

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<sup>7</sup> [PCC Q&A](#), 23 February 2017

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/apr/18/new-met-police-chief-cressida-dick-huge-concern-gun-knife-crime>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/03/london-schools-urged-install-metal-detectors-help-stop-knife-crime>

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