

Publication from Caroline Russell: More Harm Than Good, Knife Images on Police Social Media

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1. Publication from Caroline Russell: More Harm Than Good, Knife Images on Police Social Media

The Met Police has drastically reduced the number of images of knives shared on social media in the past year, according to new research from Caroline Russell. [1]

Caroline hopes this is in response to the mounting academic evidence showing the harm caused by exposure to these frightening images. [2]

The Mayor's own Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) does not share images of knives and has launched its own study into the effects of these images on young people and whether the practice has any impact on reducing knife harm in communities. This research has been delayed. [3]

Green London Assembly Member Caroline Russell says:

The drop in the number of knife images shared by the Met shows that the voices of young people, knife harm reduction charities, and academics, who are rightly critical of these images, may have been heard.

However, research from London's VRU assessing the impact of these harmful images promised to me last year is still facing delay after delay.

The police can follow the lead of Thames Valley Police and show they are keeping communities safe, without filling their social media with pictures of scary blades. [4]

There is no consistent communications policy across the MPS on sharing knife images, so I am calling for the Met to listen to the evidence that already exists and create a policy to stop sharing these images altogether, as it

is clear they are doing more harm than good.
Patrick Green, CEO of Ben Kinsella Trust says:

Whilst it is important that the Metropolitan Police highlight its successes in removing dangerous weapons from our streets, we need to ensure we do this in a way that does not have the undesired effect of increasing fear of violent crime.

"I am pleased to see that there has been a reduction in the number of knife images used by the Metropolitan Police in the social media posts.

"I urge the Met to follow other forces and continue to use images that illustrate the positive impact of their anti-knife crime operations on their social media platforms.

2. Editors Notes

[1] More Harm Than Good, Knife Images on Police Social Media - <https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/2022%20More%20Harm%20Than%20Good%20-%20Knife%20Images%20on%20Social%20Media%20report%20pdf.pdf>

[2] The pre-print of this research was published in September 2021 <https://psyarxiv.com/ma6g2/> with the full research being published in June 2022 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13676261.2022.2086038>

[3] Press release from the Mayor in January 2022 announcing that the Young People's Action Group will examine impact of images of knives posted on social media, it was expected to be published by the end of March <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/mayoral/research-on-images-of-knives-on-social-media>

Caroline asked an MQ in September 2022 asking for an update on the Young People's Action Group research <https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2022/2905>

[4] Thames Valley Police will stop sharing photos of knife amnesty weapons <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/17909514.thames-valley-police-will-stop-sharing-photos-knife-amnesty-weapons/>

Read last year's research from Caroline <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/caroline-russell/mayor-must-stop-met-from-sharing-knife-images>

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