



**Caroline Russell AM**  
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**The Queen's Walk**  
**LONDON SE1 2AA**

Sadiq Khan  
City Hall  
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London  
SE1 2AA  
Via email

14 October 2021

Dear Sadiq,

### **Knife images in crime prevention communication**

Following our discussion this morning at Mayor's Question Time, I am writing to forward the pre-print research recently published by University of Strathclyde in collaboration with the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit.<sup>1</sup>

As I said this morning, this research indicates that showing distinctive or "flashy" looking images of knives might influence people to adopt knife carrying. It also shows that knife images have the potential to frighten susceptible young people into carrying knives for self-defence or prompt them in to carrying them because they think it is "cool".

I welcome that your Violence Reduction Unit, like leading knife harm reduction charities, shows no images of knives on social media.

My recent research found that in the last year, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) circulated more than 2,100 images of knives on Twitter, as can be seen in the attached image.<sup>2</sup>

You said this morning that forthcoming academic research will "hopefully persuade the MPS...to change their stance". In our discussion, I said that the publication of the Sheffield Hallam University research, that you referred to in your answer, is likely to be delayed for about six months until Easter 2022.

There is a growing understanding of the harm caused by sharing images of knives raised by young people, academics and knife harm charities. Will you use your influence as Mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner for London, to call on the MPS to, at the very least, pause the sharing of images of knives on social media from MPS accounts until the research is published and a final decision can be made.



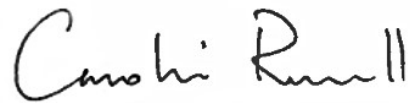
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The harm of showing these images is increasingly clear. I understand the MPS needs to communicate to Londoners about their work in communities, but this must be done without the risk of prompting more Londoners to carry knives.

I hope you will make this case to the MPS without delay, to show young Londoners that we are listening to their concerns about this harmful practice.

Yours sincerely,



**Caroline Russell**  
**Green Party Member of the London Assembly**

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<sup>1</sup> 'Are images of seized knives an effective crime deterrent? A comparative thematic analysis of young people's views within the Scottish context', <https://psyarxiv.com/ma6g2/>

<sup>2</sup> Knife images shared by MPS Twitter accounts 2020-21

[https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/knife\\_images\\_shared\\_by\\_mps\\_twitter\\_accounts\\_2020-21.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/knife_images_shared_by_mps_twitter_accounts_2020-21.pdf)

