



City Hall Greens

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Sadiq Khan
City Hall
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(sent via email)

15 June 2022

Dear Sadiq,

Publication of research into the effectiveness of images of seized knives as a crime deterrent

I am following up on the letter I sent to you last October after our discussion at Mayor's Question Time on 14 October 2021, about the use of knife images in crime prevention communication and have not yet received a response from your office.¹

I asked you to use your influence as Mayor and Police and Crime Commissioner for London, to call on the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) to, at the very least, pause the sharing of images of knives on social media from MPS accounts until the research is published.

The new study carried out by the University of Strathclyde and others, funded by the Scottish Violence Reduction Unit, on whether the images of seized knives work as an effective crime deterrent importantly centres on the perspectives of young people and their experiences of knife violence.

The findings include that "the use of knife seizure images may provoke negative reactions and create a culture of fear (as exacerbated by the media), potentially encourage knife carrying (e.g. for protection) and perpetuate negative stereotypes and pre-conceived beliefs about who is likely to carry a knife".²

You told me at Mayor's Question Time on 14 October 2021 that you wanted to wait for the evidence to be published before taking action, and now the evidence has been published confirming what young people have been telling us all along about this harmful practice.³

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 blades.

Young people, knife harm charities, Assembly Members cross party and academics have all been calling for the Met to stop sharing images of terrifying knives on social media and are now supported by this recently published research.^{4 5 6}

I hope you will now make the case for the MPS to stop sharing images of terrifying blades on their social media, to protect young people from the harms clearly outlined in the research and show communities across London that we are listening to the evidence and addressing their real concerns about the impacts of this harmful practice.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Russell
Green Party Member of the London Assembly

¹ Knife images in crime prevention communication - Letter to the Mayor, 14 October 2021

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021_10_14_cr_knife_images_letter_to_the_mayor.pdf

² Are images of seized knives an effective crime deterrent? A comparative thematic analysis of young people's views within the Scottish context, 11 June 2022

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13676261.2022.2086038>

³ Crime prevention and knife images, Mayor's Question Time, 14 October 2021

<https://www.london.gov.uk/questions/2021/4053>

⁴ Assembly urges Met to stop sharing knife images motion, 02 December 2021

<https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/assembly-urges-met-to-stop-sharing-knife-images>

⁵ Met police tweets may encourage young people to carry knives, research finds, 04 October 2021

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/oct/04/met-police-tweets-may-encourage-young-people-to-carry-knives-research-finds>

⁶ Mayor must stop Met from sharing knife images, 14 October 2021 <https://www.london.gov.uk/press-releases/assembly/caroline-russell/mayor-must-stop-met-from-sharing-knife-images>