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Stop and search shake-up should spearhead overhaul of knife crime strategy in London, comprehensive new report suggests

- Just 15 per cent of stop and searches currently target knife crime, compared with 60 per cent for drugs
- Report author Shaun Bailey wants greater focus on knives

A refocusing of stop and search on finding knives instead of drugs should spearhead a complete overhaul of knife crime strategy in London, according to a comprehensive new report.

‘Londoners’ Lives Matter’, by London Assembly member Shaun Bailey, points to figures showing just 15 per cent of stop and searches are currently motivated by a search for blades, with 60 per cent related to drugs.

The report also points out that young black males are ten times more likely to be stopped and searched for drugs than young white males, despite black males statistically being half as likely to use drugs.

Mr Bailey wants to see police refocus their efforts away from petty drug offences and to carry out more knife searches on individuals – an approach he believes communities historically opposed to stop and search want to see.

The report also calls for:

- A focused approach on youth violence with the production of a five to ten-year prevention strategy with tangible targets and regular progress monitoring
- Adoption of a public health strategy, such as the ‘Glasgow model’, which the report suggests could cut knife crime in London by a third
- Increased intelligence gathering through social media of building tensions between known groups
- Ad campaigns encouraging families to talk about knife crime
- Hard-hitting social media campaign led by Mayor
- Pilot of new AI technologies like Smart CCTV
- Improved access to business CCTV for police reacting to violent street incidents

The report is proposed as a comprehensive approach to tackling knife crime in London, designed to replace the Mayor’s current Knife Crime Strategy, which Mr Bailey says is not working.

London Assembly member Shaun Bailey said: “Knife crime destroys families, fractures communities and puts a stain on our city. Unfortunately, the Mayor’s policies are having no impact and we must seek a new approach.

“Trust among the black community around stop and search is low. With the number of people being patted down for petty drugs offences, when the statistics show the black community is far less likely to be using drugs, it is clear why.

“I do believe though there is a desire for increased searches if they focus on knives and not drugs. This refocus should be the catalyst for a major overhaul of our approach to knife crime. My approach pulls in the best elements of schemes like the one in Glasgow, utilises social media intelligence gathering to prevent knife attacks and calls for a major long-term strategy that could help cut stabbings in the capital by a third.

“With 80 people killed last year, this goes way beyond party politics and I am urging the Mayor to work with me to address the shortcomings in the current strategy.”

ENDS.

Notes

- Shaun Bailey is a London-wide Conservative Assembly Member
- A full copy of the report is attached

For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact the press office below.

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