



Metropolitan Police Authority

Strategic and Operational Policing Committee - 8 June 2009

OPERATION BLUNT 2

Report by T/Assistant Commissioner Territorial Policing on behalf of the Commissioner

Summary

This report provides members with an overview of the strategic and tactical learning from Operation Blunt 2 which continues as the MPS operational response to knife crime and broader serious youth violence. The report considers the learning that has emerged from developing and maintaining a strong community mandate for enhanced stop and search to deter the carriage of lethal weapons. The report includes the ongoing transfer of strategic and tactical learning, including comment on contributions to public confidence indicators.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS – That

- 1. Members note the strategic and tactic learning arising from Operation Blunt 2; and**
- 2. note the impact of central London resource requirements upon the operational delivery under Blunt 2 (Appendix 1).**

B. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 1. Operation Blunt 2 (OB2) commenced on 19 May 2008 and represents a significant enhancement of enforcement tactics in response to public concern regarding public place violence in London, notably that affecting young people and involving the use of knives. This continues to be a pan-London and cross-business group operational response with delivery through by Borough commands co-ordinated within a central MPS command structure.**
- 2. On 5 July 2008, the operation was further enhanced through the addition of a central OB2 Task Force initially comprising uniform officers and detectives including operational units from CO, SCD, SO and TP. This Task Force now comprises some 50 uniformed officers drawn from all Boroughs for central daily deployment in accordance with identified incidents and associated risk.**

3. The MPS is one of 15 Forces participating in the Home Office Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) that commenced on 5 June 2008. TKAP has recently indicated a broadened remit to focus upon Most Serious Violence (MSV) in the 13-24 years victim group. TKAP is scheduled to continue until 31 March 2010.

Strategic Intention

4. Operation Blunt 2 as the following strategic intention:
 - To stop the killing of young people on the streets of London;
 - To reduce serious violence involving young people as victims and offenders;
 - To reduce the carrying of weapons by young people on the streets of London;
 - To maintain the support of communities and young people for police action to reduce youth violence.
5. The strategic approach continues to be an intelligence-led focus upon *dangerous places* and *dangerous people* who represent greater risk of serious youth violence. The approach is intended to:
 - create and maintain an environment that is hostile to the routine acquisition, carriage and use of lethal weapons in public space;
 - arrest, prosecute and convict individuals who commit violent crime, whether as individuals or as part of groups (gangs);
 - set a clear MPS lead on enforcement, ensuring that tactics recognise and respond to the concerns and expectations of the community, including young people.

Strategic Approach

Tactical Delivery

6. Operational tactics comprise:
 - Increased fixed and flexible search deployments and security measures to restrict knife carriage – educational establishments, entertainment and leisure venues, transport infrastructure and public space events;
 - Intelligence led stop and search operations targeting specific individuals, groups, areas, events, venues, town centres and transport hubs/routes;
 - Targeted enforcement operations to disrupt and prevent violence perpetrated by violent individuals and groups (gangs);
 - Disruption of knife supply through intelligence-led ground searches (neighbourhood weapon sweeps) and enforcement of existing retail sale supply legislation (including internet);

Tasking, Co-ordination and Review

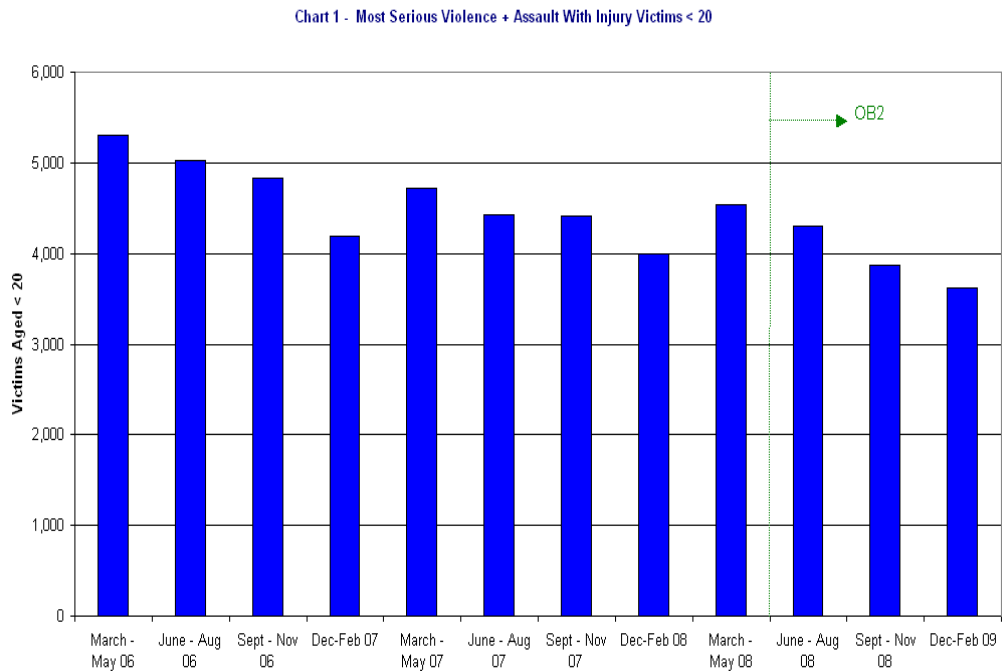
7. Command, control and co-ordination of enforcement activity has been achieved through central tasking processes operating to direct supporting assets to Boroughs in accordance with best available intelligence. Deployments are made by Borough Commands with central support provided by Central Operations (mainly TSG) and the OB2 Task Force.

8. A central OB2 Co-ordination Group operates two-weekly and a Daily Management Meeting ensures immediate review and adjustment of deployments across the MPS based upon current intelligence. This central Daily Management process has been developed to monitor recent incidents, emerging trends, intelligence, community impact and capture key learning.
9. Performance in relation to knife crime has been reviewed monthly through meetings with operational leads in each Borough. These meetings have explored and shared effective tactics. This has included an ongoing focus upon the charge rate for knife crime and knife possession.
10. Operational phases are identified across the year where circumstances indicate increased risk of serious youth violence. Tactics are intensified during these phases. Notably these periods cover key risk emerging at the end of school terms and across periods involving key celebrations and events, e.g. Halloween. Operational planning has involved the use of increased search tactics and security regimes as part of the planning for key events, e.g. Notting Hill Carnival. Other operational responses have been co-ordinated with Blunt 2 phasing e.g. Operation Argon targeting clubs over Christmas and New Year. This operational co-ordination extends to Operation Tyrol (transport hubs), TOCU and deployments by BTP and COLP.

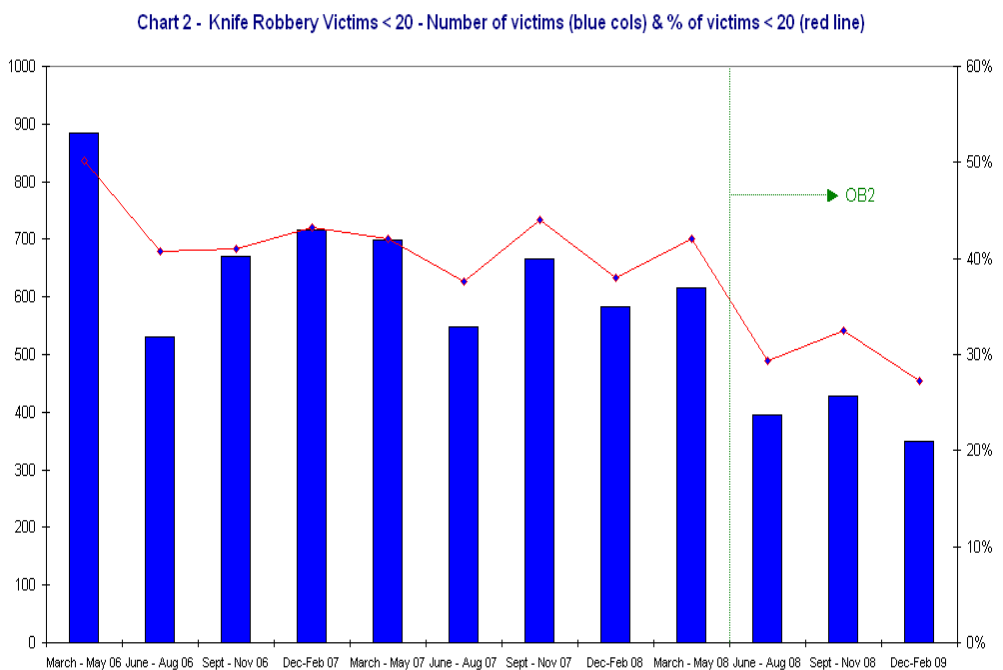
Performance Summary

11. Knife crime and wider serious youth violence will remain a priority for the MPS during 2009-10. There is under-reporting and ongoing risk of youth confrontation with lethal weapons. The impact of this violence remains a key concern for communities in London. A sustained and intelligence-led enforcement response with close community engagement remains necessary.
12. Whilst the statistics for youth homicide (10-19 years) show some early improvement, members should note that considerable risk remains and sustained action will be required. To date in 2009, 8 young people have lost their lives in violent circumstances.
13. Youth homicide (under 20 years) has decreased by 23.3% in the year to March 2009 compared with the previous year. (30 to 23).
14. Recorded knife crime in London has reduced by 13.3% (14,192 to 12,310) in the year ending March 2009 compared with the previous year. This represents 1,882 fewer recorded crimes involving a knife.
15. The number of youth victims (10-19 years) of violent crime in London has reduced by 9.8% (22,586 to 20,377) in the year ending March 2009 compared with the previous year. This represents 2,209 fewer young victims of violent crime.

16. Chart 1 below shows early decline in the level of youth violence victims as OB2 developed during 2008.



17. Chart 2 below illustrates a similar impact for knife robbery.



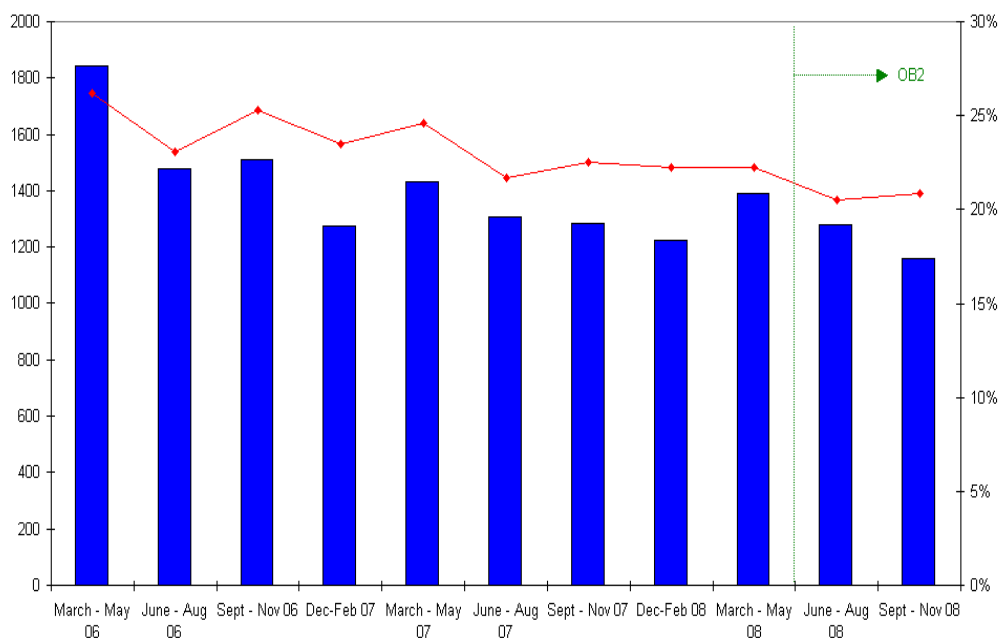
18. Table 1 below provides information regarding trends in the severity of injury arising from knife crime offences. This shows significant reductions in the severity of injuries for both the under 20 and under 26

age ranges.

Age of Victim	OB2 (July 08 – Feb '09) – No. of victims		Comparison with Nov '07– June '08		Comparison with July '07 – Feb '08	
	Serious	All injuries	Serious	All	Serious	All
< 20	155	417	-33%	-31%	-30%	-28%
20 – 25	96	235	-30%	-25%	-24%	-22%
26+	182	511	-19%	-3%	-5%	-5%

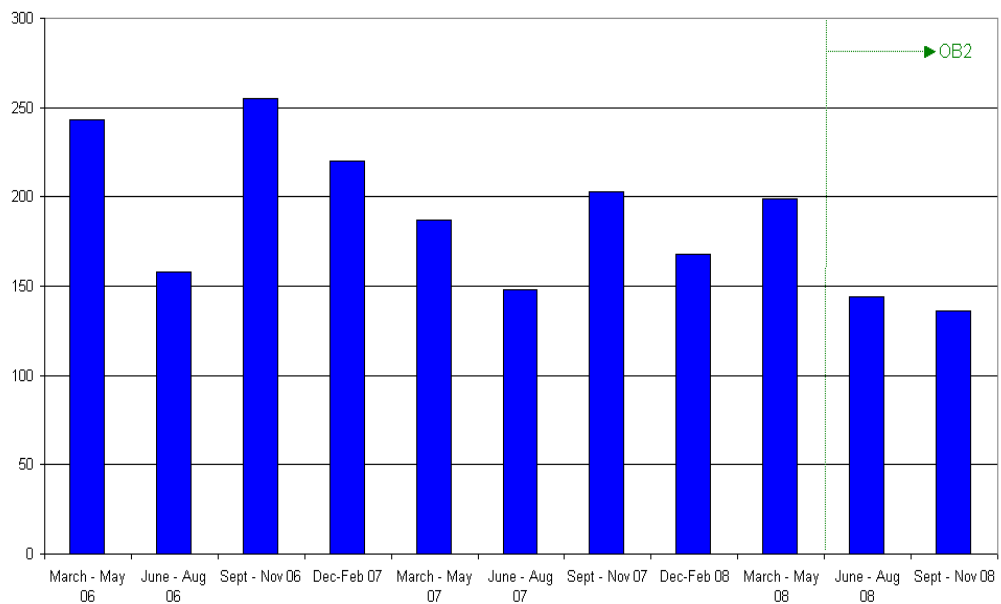
19. Chart 3 below shows the decline in young people accused of offences of most serious violence and assault with injury.

Chart 3 - MSV+AWI Accused < 20 -
Number = blue cols, % <20 of all accused = red line



20. Chart 4 below shows a similar decline in the number of young people accused of knife robbery offences.

Chart 4 - Knife Robbery Number of Accused < 20



21. Chart 5 shows the decline in the number of people proceeded against for possession of knives and pointed/bladed articles. With data in Table 2 providing evidence of declining knife finds through search activity, there are significant indications that routine knife carriage is declining.

Chart 5 - Knife & Sharp Object Possession Accused
Number of Charges (blue col.) & % of Accused Charged (red line)

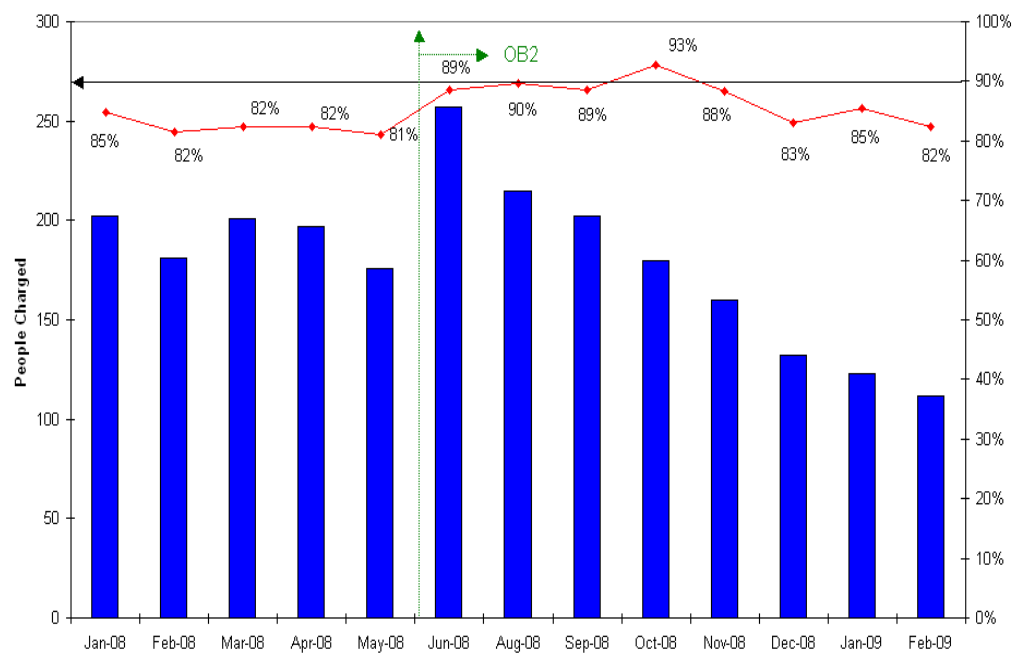


Table 2. OB2 searches (Sec 60 & Sec 1 PACE) June '08 to February '09

Period	Stops/ searches	Knives Recovered.	Knives per stops	Other weapons per stops
16/6 to 29/6	11,005	139	1.3%	0.7%
30/6 to 28/7	22,084	335	1.5%	0.7%
29/7 to 31/8	21,746	187	0.9%	0.4%
1/9 to 29/9	25,859	182	0.7%	0.4%
30/9 to 2/11	41,823	200	0.5%	0.3%
3/11 to 30/11	31,413	158	0.5%	0.3%
1/12 to 29/12	23,827	73	0.3%	0.3%
30/12 to 01/2	26,397	103	0.4%	0.3%
2/2 to 2/3	24,669	106	0.4%	0.4%
16/6 to 2/3	228,823	1,483		

22. Retail knife supply is tackled through activity with Trading Standards departments. Over 1200 test purchases have been made with declining failure rates as prosecutions and publicity have impacted upon irresponsible retailers. More recent work is focused upon reducing the knife supply to young people through internet purchase.
23. Public confidence - The Public Attitude Survey (PAS), shows the percentage of people who were very or fairly worried about knife crime fell from 43% for the quarter ending Sept. 2008 to 38% for the quarter ending Dec 2008.
24. A further PAS question asks whether people carrying or using knives to threaten or commit violence are a problem. The percentage fell from 46% for the quarter ending June '08 (when OB2 began) to 40% for the quarter ending Dec. '08. This data remains volatile and is impacted significantly by media coverage of high profile incidents and subsequent court proceedings.

Strategic and Tactical Learning

25. The following are significant areas of learning:
26. *Daily Management Meeting (DMM)* – A corporate process to assess incidents and intelligence from pan-London perspective has ensured OB2 Task Force and other deployments where there are indications of anticipated serious youth violence. This links with work to identify 'signal incidents' that indicate potential escalation of violence.
27. *Real time monitoring and central command* – The Special Operations Room (SOR) at Lambeth CCC has been utilised to provide command and control for the response to serious youth violence. A senior officer

(Silver) assesses and manages risk in real time, ensuring the appropriate deployment of Task Force and other resources. Monitoring calls involving youths and weapons gives an early indication of threats and the opportunity to prevent serious violence.

28. *B2 Task Force* – A dedicated resource deployed each day between 3.00pm and 10.30pm. It is centrally briefed and deployed to Boroughs on the basis of the latest assessment of risk. It has a single remit to engage with and use search powers to detect and deter the carriage of lethal weapons. This promotes professionalism and expertise in the use of search powers, notably those used under Section 60, CJPOA, 1994. The OB2 Task Force has conducted approximately 25% of the search activity under OB2. Leaflets, community observers and supervisor assessment of youth reaction following the searches have been integral to the work of the Task Force.
29. *Community Impact Assessment* – OB2 has invested significantly in initial and ongoing contact with communities, including young people. The process has involved formal returns of engagement activity combined with daily and weekly review of tension indicators through the DMM. *Communities Together* has enabled ongoing taskings to each Borough to monitor and detect any indications of tension arising from OB2 tactics. The Community Impact Assessment has been refreshed in February 2009 and reveals:
- A broad and consistent level of support for enhanced stop and search tactics deployed under OB2 since May 2008;
 - Broad and consistent support from young people, including those from BME communities who appreciate the requirement to remove lethal weapons from the few for the safety of the many;
 - Broad and consistent support from young people, including those from BME communities who appreciate the requirement to remove lethal weapons from the few for the safety of the many;
 - A perception amongst BME groups that police officers are sometimes unprofessional when exercising these powers;
 - The continuing need for courtesy and information on search grounds (including S60) when conducting large numbers of searches involving a similar target group;
30. *Stop and search* - This has been central to the strategy of creating an environment that is hostile for those who choose to routinely carry lethal weapons in public space. Whilst it is difficult to measure prevention, the recovery of lethal weapons must have direct impact in preventing some homicides and serious assaults. The detection of knives carried on the person has showed initial growth with the increase in police search activity, followed by a reduction of weapon finds to significantly lower but sustained level.
31. Full explanation of search powers, notably Section 60, combined with strong and ongoing youth engagement has been a central feature of

- this tactic. The emphasis has been placed on searching to prevent serious violence, including homicide. The vast majority of young people have accepted this tactic as necessary in protecting them from the small minority who are intent on carrying and using lethal weapons.
32. Operations using screening arches have continued. These have been highly visible deployments to increase the deterrent effect and reassure young people who are concerned at knife carriage by a minority. Deployments have been co-ordinated with BTP and TOCU operations on the public transport system and as part of policing operations for major events, e.g. the Notting Hill Carnival.
 33. Tasking and review processes have ensured that stop and search under OB2 has been led by best intelligence. Daily, fortnightly and monthly review processes assess recorded knife crime, wider SYV, conflict intelligence and forthcoming events. The use of Section 60 has been subject to ongoing community scrutiny within Borough commands and central review.
 34. Between 2007-08 and 2008-09 the number of authorisations under S60, CJPOA, 1994 increased 705 to 2,094 (197%). In the same period the number of searches conducted under these authorities increased from 17, 617 to 111, 708 (534%). In the same period the use of powers (120%)
 35. *Ground searches* - The regular searching of public space for concealed weapons has been developed under OB2. More than 200 searches are conducted each week. In most cases these are led by Safer Neighbourhood Teams and can involve local authority staff and specialist search officers. Locations are selected on the basis of intelligence, including previous finds. This search activity is also undertaken for public space events (fairs, carnivals etc) and venues that represent an ongoing risk of violence. Search regimes at private premises have been enhanced to compliment this approach.
 36. *Risk identification and management* - The identification and risk assessment of events that may attract a heightened risk of youth conflict has progressed under Operation Blunt 2. A list of events is maintained and reviewed to ensure appropriate policing plans and enable dynamic support as required from the OB2 Task Force.
 37. *Post-school patrols* - Post-school patrols have been further developed under Operations Blunt 2 in conjunction with Operation Tyrol. Some £600K of additional funding was made available from TKAP for patrols in the spring term (2008-09). Patrols comprising SNTs, Safer Schools Officers, Safer Transport Teams and Task Teams from the Transport OCU were focused upon key school/colleges, transport routes and hubs. This was combined with central review within the Special Operations Room and daily assessment violence offences involving youth victims between 3.00pm and 6.00pm. Deployments in January

resulted in reductions of over 22% in youth violence victims in the MPS.

38. *Transport* - There remains a requirement to co-ordinate deployments within Boroughs and across the public transport system. An improved understanding of the travel patterns of young people for school and leisure has informed the post-school patrols and enabled co-ordinated deployments with BTP and the Transport OCU.
39. *Operational Phasing* - Analysis of youth victimisation shows clear links to the school terms and periods containing key events, e.g. halloween and bonfire celebrations. An annual operational plan now enables deployments to be intensified and integrated with other policing operations during periods when the risk of serious youth violence and knife crime is judged to be higher. This phased operational plan now guides deployments through the central and local tasking processes.

Gang Disruption

40. The emphasis for OB2 will remain upon enforcement activity designed to reduce the harm caused by a minority of individual violent offenders. Some of these individuals will be involved in groups or gangs.
41. The focus of OB2 is firmly towards the street grouping or gang as distinct from organised criminal networks (OCNs). Street gangs feature disproportionately in youth homicides and other violence. They are more fluid and chaotic, and less likely to have criminal gain as the central motivation for their violent offending than OCNs.
42. There are currently three main strands to OB2's anti-gang activities.
- Following upon the learning from the 5 boroughs under Operation Alliance, the Violent Crime Directorate is developing and disseminating effective gang disruption/prevention tactics across the MPS.
 - The development of a model of practice for gang disruption/prevention using the experience from current enforcement activity in 16 boroughs targeting over 350 individuals in some 27 identified groupings. This work links with the Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP) so that the model can benefit from national practice in this area.
 - The co-ordination of operational response where gangs merge with OCNs remains a key objective for OB2 for 2009-10. Future pan-London enforcement operations for gang disruption are planned.

Next Steps

43. Operation Blunt 2 will continue during 2009-10 with a focus on mainstreaming activity and reducing costs. The central aim of preventing youth homicide remains.
44. The deployments under Blunt 2 have the potential to impact upon the

new indicator of public confidence. This is particularly the case in relation to (1) stop and search activity (including screening arches) (2) post-school patrol regimes and (3) public place ground searches.

45. These tactics deliver very visible presence impacting large numbers of people, notably young people, in areas of high footfall. This includes areas, public space events, venues, town centres and transport routes/hubs.
46. Operation Blunt 2 tactics will continue to make a significant contribution to the Commissioner's key objectives, notably (1) *convincing communities we are on their side*, (2) *being intolerant of violence* and (3) *securing our streets*.
47. The strategic and tactical learning outlined in this report is shared through existing tasking and review meetings, including those within Borough Commands that involve the wider CDRPs.
48. The experience of enforcement under Operation Blunt 2 to date is also being shared with the Serious Youth Violence Board to ensure its integration with wider preventative strategies addressing serious youth violence in London.

C. RACE AND EQUALITY IMPACT

1. Youth homicide continues to impact disproportionately upon BME communities in London. In the year to March 2009 25 teenagers lost their lives to violence. Some 84% of victims (21) were from BME communities. Some 73% of victims with serious stab injuries are from BME communities. This disproportionality in both victims and perpetrators of knife crime is most significant in the under 20 age group.
2. The equality and community impact of OB2 continues to be assessed to ensure that tactics are led by intelligence as to occurrence and risk of serious youth violence and knife crime. Youth engagement and the sensitive use of the stop and search tactic have been important in gaining a greater understanding of youth violence, notably that element which is not reported to the authorities.
3. The analysis of stop and search is a complex area and features in regular reporting and discussion at each Borough Stop and Search Network Monitoring Meeting. OB2 has reported to the central meeting of these Groups.
4. An examination of persons stopped and searched between July 2008 and February 2009 shows that the proportion of searches impacting BME communities (68%) is broadly aligned to the proportion of those accused of knife crime offences from BME communities (72%).

D. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

1. The activity described in this report has comprised delivery by a range of MPS units at corporate and Borough level.
2. It is therefore not possible to isolate the costs arising from Operation Blunt 2 from those incurred by a range of MPS delivery that impact upon serious youth violence and knife crime.
3. Specific funding of £3.85m was allocated to Operation Blunt 2 in 2008-09. This comprised:
 - £2m allocated to Blunt 2 to fund operations by Borough Commands; £1m from a corporate tasking budget and £1m transferred from a projected underspend on police pay within the TP budget.;
 - £1.85m allocated to fund the Blunt Task Force (July to March) from within TP's overtime budget.
4. An additional £850K was provided by the Tackling Knives Action Programme (TKAP). This was allocated to post school-patrols (£600K) and a number of trial youth programmes, including Crimestoppers texting and training for youth leaders.
5. Resources continue to be allocated to support Blunt 2 during 2009/10 albeit that the level of support has been affected by recent public order events. Continuing support into future years will need to be considered as part of the 2010-13 budget and business planning process.

E. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Report compiled by: [REDACTED]

During April and May 2009, the demands of G20 and central London demonstrations arising from the conflict in Sri Lanka have required a significant enhancement of police resources. This continues to impact and threaten future operational delivery under Operation Blunt 2.

The following table shows the increase in abstractions from Borough during April and May 2009 compared with 2008.

Table 1 - Staff days abstracted from Boroughs to central operations.

Month	2008	2009
January to February	12,700	11,094
March	6,645	6,601
April	7,631	18,707
May (to 12/5/09)	2,943	4,734
Total	30,207	41,136

A significant escalation of the aid requirement from the 24 April 2009 has reduced and delayed other operations under Blunt 2 targeting street violence, including that linked to street gangs.

The most recent impact of this resource requirement has resulted in the loss of the dedicated Operation Blunt 2 Task Force capability between 13 and 17 May 2009. To mitigate risk, reserves deployed to central London will be deployed to provide support to Boroughs for the reduction of serious youth violence within the constraints of necessary immediate return to central London.

For the period 13 to 17 May 2009, Boroughs will supply 700 officers each day for demonstrations arising from the Sri Lankan conflict.

The situation is under constant review but comes at a time when other aid requirements traditionally reach a peak, coinciding with a higher risk period for serious youth violence linked to school holidays and spring/summer events.