

Street Weapons Commission – Liverpool
Chief Constable Bernard Hogan-Howe
Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne

Chair - Cherie Booth

Good morning, we've got the Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe and the Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne from Merseyside Police.

Chair - Cherie Booth

Well gentlemen you've got some good news I think for us that Merseyside's Police has seen a reduction in crime, 28,000 less crime in the last year because of your policy of total policing. What does that mean?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

Well I think first of all actually over the last two years we've seen a reduction of 48,000 less crimes, so that's about a third less reported crime. Now everybody knows that recorded crime can mean different things but even so that sort of number is significant. So what we've done is over the last few years is to approach it in a way we call total policing. First of all a total war

on criminals, which means doing everything that's legal and ethical to put them on the back foot, and not the good people, we're trying to provide a total care for victims because obviously we don't solve every crime so we don't have the benefit of the victim having the support of a suspect going through the criminal justice system, and finally we're trying to be totally professional

in the way we do it. We have some tactics in that which, you know, we may want to talk about, but it has led to a major reduction in the amount of crime overall, but even within that also violent crime has been reduced. We're proud of that but it's been a lot of hard work. We're concentrating on things like causal factors such as alcohol and drugs, and to attack those two things

which disproportionately probably affect younger people, seems to have had some impact in the way that we've experienced violent crime.

Chair - Cherie Booth

So is this just the Police doing the job they should be doing anyway, better?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

Well you may say that, you could say that. But I mean we have got certain tactics. We, every 28 days, two days out of every 28 we try and lock down certain areas, and what we mean by that is we have the largest amount of ANPR cameras in the country so we try and stop every car in an area which is pinged on the ANPR, that's the automatic number plate recognition, the one

that in London charges you for congestion, but allows us to know which cars are stolen, which ones may be carrying drugs, which ones may be carrying weapons, and that's been a particularly impactful tool. We've actually taken about 24,000 vehicles off the road during the last two years which has really impacted on the mobility criminals, and some of the criminality that we have

seen. So that's been a big impact. We've got the only anti-social behaviour squad in the country. The idea behind that is to follow the repeat offender, repeat victim, repeat location idea. We can't put this squad in every area all the time, but they can concentrate on those areas that are hot spots, so that at any one time for about three months they concentrate in a particular area

try and get youth crime particularly down in that area, and try and help the victims who quite often are disproportionately affected there by taking out some of the ring leaders and some of the causal factors whether it be drugs or alcohol.

Chair - Cherie Booth

But isn't there a problem with that approach that all you're actually doing is cleaning up one area and just pushing the crime into other areas?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

There is that risk but of course the alternative is we do nothing. You know, we can't, you know, we just can't ignore where people are most affected and I think most of the research shows that if we can have a big impact on the areas which have most victimisation we can reduce crime overall and help those people who most need it. I don't think we do, what we haven't seen is

a movement of that crime into the adjoining areas. You'll get some leakage I'm sure, I

mean we're not, we don't think that you can completely remove it from the area around that area, but it does seem most young people particularly wanna, you know, they live in an area, they go to school there quite often, they probably socialise there, they don't generally wanna move

outside that area, so if we make it a bit difficult for the ones who are criminal and provide a safe environment for the ones quite often who are victims then generally they don't tend to move out of the area. You do get some leakage in terms of burglary sometimes or car crime, but around anti-social behaviour they will tend to socialise in the area they feel comfortable, and we just

wanna make 'em feel safe in that area, and that does seem to help.

Chair - Cherie Booth

Fay.

Fay Selvyn

Well there's some evidence that shows focusing on prolific offenders will actually displace activity down to younger age groups, and obviously that's an area of major concern to us in terms of gun and knife crime, have you experienced any of that, that by focusing on people who are involved in crime that actually it's moving down an age?

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne

I don't think we've really seen that at all. I mean we could, well for the last two years we'll look at knife crime alone and we've seen a, we've had about 1,000 knife crimes, a crime involving a bladed weapon which is, you know, the way it's recorded, last year, sorry two years ago, and then last year that came down to about 750, so it's about two a day on average, given that

Merseyside has 1.5 million people, it's a relatively rare event still, but we haven't noticed that sort of displacement. I've only described up to now the enforcement but of course we do have an awful lot working with our partners particularly, but also with our own Officers to divert. It's better to stop an offence and it's better to stop a child becoming an offender than it is to

actually put them through the criminal justice system cos that brands them for life, we don't want to do that. So we are trying the twin track approach and we're doing an awful lot of

diversion to make sure that those who need most care get it, and as we know the research shows that quite often young people can be identified early who are most at risk of getting into an offending pattern. But we haven't seen that sort of displacement to a younger age.

Commissioner

And how does that work? So when you're doing your total policing, it's an interesting phrase is what's that, obviously that partial policing or not doing it, so you will target an area and you'll say right it's the Smith family at 47 Blog Street, is that the way it works, they're, they are the problem in this area, we're gonna follow those guys, we're gonna hassle them within the law, make it really difficult for them, let them know that they're, that, what do you call them, the impact, the phrase here that Steve Moy used which I can't get just now....

Commissioner

Oh the impact players.

Commissioner

The impact players, and so where does the more touchy feely bit come in, you'll say we're a bit worried about nephews Jimmy, we'll put him in touch, we'll tell Social Services about him, is that, could you just help us understand on the ground how it works when you lot, cos this all sounds you all go in tooled up, total policing, war on crime, all that stuff and it sounds good, where does the diversion, how, just talk us how it actually happens.

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne

Well probably Simon can fill in a bit as well, but what I would point out is that first of all we've got, I'll concentrate on the areas in which we most try to enforce the law, we concentrate on those who repeat offend a lot to try and get crime down. We've also got neighbourhood officers and community support officers in the neighbourhoods who know,

should know the people in

their area and know the ones who are migrating from being at risk to being a problem, so we can help to identify those people who need help. The families and sometimes the youngsters who need that help in the family and then we can work with our partners to work with the schools, to work with Social Services to make sure that their help is targeted in the right place. We

provide our own help as well, I mean there are a long list of schemes that we actually fund, I mean we're the only Force in the country that [INAUDIBLE] the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, we, each year we put about 60 youngsters in the summer through various schemes, that's essentially intended to divert them from getting involved in criminality or putting them at risk. So, and we've

targeted those schemes in the areas that we think need most help, so we've not been able to do it right across Merseyside, but where we know there is the highest risk around school times or out of school times, then we try to provide other alternatives, so whether it be football, sometimes cultural events, but sometimes...

Commissioner

Sometimes fishing we heard.

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne

Yeah, for those who enjoy fishing we also make, it would drive me crackers but for those who enjoy it...

Commissioner

Total fishing?

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne

Yeah total... but you know we know that youngsters and particularly young lads, but not only now you get young girls as well involved in playing football, you know, you get them involved in doing a community, getting involved in sport. It's a great opportunity to talk to let them realise we're not just this uniform, but we're also people, and also we can work

with them.

Chair - Cherie Booth

I think Mark has a question.

Mark Johnson

So what do you think the sort of perception is in the local communities that, you know, sort of the crime is most prevalent? What do you think the sort of perception of the Police is in those communities?

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne

Well I stand by their judgement rather than me trying to impose my perception. What I hope they see is people who listen, care enough to do something, and then we react when they say they've got a problem. I don't think we've got a problem talking to the people. I've concentrated on the enforcement edge cos we think that's delivered a lot of results, and we still

have [neighbourhood] officers, we've got one for, an example would be we've got a lad, chap called Robbie the Bobby who works in north Liverpool, it's quite a difficult area in the area he works. He's well known. We've got lots of other dedicated officers, community support officers and the people who live in that area met him and his colleagues every day. So that's the caring,

listening edge of the Police service, but when we've listened and we've got the intelligence back somebody better do something about it, so I don't think people are persuaded to develop a trusting relationship if all we do is smile. We've gotta smile, we've gotta be approachable but we've then gotta do something with the information, so another edge of the enforcement is that,

you know, we've gotta call it Operation Halt. We're trying to attack that Operation Halt, we've all, you'll probably find as you go around the country every Police Service has got an Operation called something but...

Commissioner

They're all very macho names aren't they? Instead of Operation Bubble or... Operation...

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne

Well you try selling that to some of these, try selling that to some of the public meetings I go to, I don't know, but you have to get a message over to your own staff and to the public, and you are right, it is a bit hard edge. But this particular operation which we've been running now for two years, is based on the fact that if we can get to some of the aggravated features that cause crime

whether it be drugs or alcohol... this is around the drug supply, the street level drug supply, in the past we've probably been guilty as a Police Service generally of taking a long time to get evidence together before we act, because you need to for the most organised of criminals, but for the street dealer frankly they're not that organised, it is in the house, as is the money

and we just put doors in. So if people give us information we will get a Magistrate's Warrant which is the test of probity, you know, it's not just us saying we think, you know, just someone's told us, if the Magistrate agrees we get the Warrant, we'll put the door in very quickly, and every day we'd do probably a couple of doors a day throughout Merseyside, and partly we get

drugs, partly we get cash and sometimes it's amazing what we do find because the persons whose door we went through didn't expect us to come there, so we find weapons as well, and that's been particularly helpful on the gun side and we've recovered over 200 weapons in the last year, which, I'm glad to say, aren't on the streets of Merseyside, and when I say weapons I

mean guns, and it's a lot of guns but they are now in our hands and not in someone else's. So I want, I've, you've challenged us about the total policing, yes we are hard edged on the enforcement side but it isn't the only thing we do.

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

But I think this, I mean I think the debate always slips between all this high volume stuff and all the early prevention, the Police have been great allies in those developments in the last ten years, but there's always this case of the nephew who's known to be part of that kind of criminalogenic family that you've identified, you've targeted, who is not gonna turn up voluntarily to the

football competition, who's not gonna enrol on the D of E scheme, who's not gonna do this

and do that, and that the evidence seems to be that there is this small group who are just being missed. They're not yet storing guns and behaving in the ways that you've described around enforcement, but nevertheless they seem to be on that track and they're the ones we're most

concerned about, and the question is around all the big prevention and diversion agenda, how do you actually get those kids connected, either just to occupy their time so they're not doing something else, or at least, you know, developing them and educating them so that perhaps in the future they're not gonna go down that negative path.

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne

I can give you a good example really of something recently we've been developing to touch on just that issue. Not very far from here at [Borough Nosley] we've set up a new anti-social behaviour unit there which is a mixture of Police Officers, people from the Local Authority and from housing providers and their very purpose is actually just to do what you've described so that if

you're going back to what the Chief was saying about some of our tactical enforcement that targets the offender, these people are both working with us to, for example, develop cases for ASBO's against families and individuals that are causing problems, and therefore a sanction, but very much the philosophy is to map out a family and look at those people at the cusp of risk

and harm and actually work with him quite proactively to stop them drifting down that route into crime and anti-social behaviour and they've had some real early successes.

Commissioner

And what are they actually doing?

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne

Well for example if you took a typical family unit and you can imagine different models where there's one parent, two parents, they have multiple problems within the family, they will map that family out, some people quite clearly we will want to give our attention to because they've broken the law and they deserve to be arrested. There are others that we can see either by age or by

their behaviours that aren't actually at that point of causing us a problem where we need to enforce the law, but we realise professionally if we don't intervene now they're the next generation, so they will work, in low numbers, with those most problematic families to actually either do things like parenting classes with the leader of the family, that seemed to be successful in basic

life skills, there could be coercion that's built around that, so for example where you've got Housing Trusts and you're able to enforce tenancy agreements there can be a bit of a quid pro quo stroke that if you don't do this certain thing, I mean one recent case I've experience of was involving a family involved in racist crime, and the fact that as part of the sanction for being

dealt with for that racist crime, apart from what the Courts did they were able to enforce tenancy restrictions on that house and have them evicted, apparently cos they didn't cut the grass, and actually caused more disruption to that family than actually the criminal justice was able to do about pointing the particular journey, so there's more sanctions than just the sanction from

the, from the justice system using civil penalties, but actually it's identifying people probably between about the ages of ten and 17 who are sort of amenable to working in different ways with not just the Police but as the Chief said before we've worked with a range of partners, voluntary groups, the community themselves to actually learn different skills and realises another

path to take, and again I know you'll be hearing from, this morning, from some other people who are gonna come and talk to you but a recent scheme we've run in that part of Merseyside involved the community foundation who are a charity organisation that bring together different bodies to work with people at risk, and sometimes that can be quite simple things, it's just taking people to

learn a new skill, it might be repairing a motorbike, it might be sort of learning to do something as the Chief was saying earlier the Duke of Edinburgh context, but I think in terms of volume we're not gonna win that battle quickly, but by picking up those people that you can see in terms of risk are most at, most vulnerable in terms of their next step on the journey of criminality, that

we can show not just in those but across Merseyside some real success, and I think the testament ultimately to that statement is the fact we've seen significant falls in crime at the same time significant rises in the people we've re-arrested, which, if we've got a mandate

from the public to deliver services, apparently that's what they want to see, we're here to enforce the law and...

Chair - Cherie Booth

How important do you think the coercive element in this is? You obviously, you're the Police, you represent the law and that means you represent sanctions, does that give you more power or does that in fact mean that really people aren't prepared to engage with you because you're authority figures?

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne

Do you want me to...?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

Well I mean I think that it, the uniform and the power to enforce gives usually an opportunity to start a conversation. I doesn't mean to say there will be a nasty outcome, but [INAUDIBLE] sanction outcome. Let me start there with a domestic dispute. If one of our Officers walked in the house in a way if all it is is a dispute, not violence, which, you know, other people have been worried, people might say well why are you here, what's it gotta, you know, why have you got a right to come into this dialogue, but the uniform and the opportunity this gives you is to go in and get involved, and there is a respect for it. I know people often say in society now that people don't respect the Police, well I'm afraid I don't agree with that. If that was the case people wouldn't ring us. I mean why bother ringing people that, you know, you think are not gonna do the job or why aren't people complaining in their thousands. So I think people do respect the Police.

Commissioner

You answer the phone when you dial 999 that's why.

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Byrne

Well, we do...

Commissioner

[INAUDIBLE] gonna do it.

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

Well you say that but I mean we get two million telephone calls a year, and we now answer them 90 odd percent of the time on time. So people do ring us because they get an answer, better than many commercial, and I won't name them, but many commercial call centres, so they can get through and we're there 24 hours and we don't turn people away.

So we are the

emergency service of last resort and we'll do those things that may not be in the job description but we'll get stuck in and I think that gives us a legitimacy, it's partly enforcement, but it's partly the fact that people do trust us, and yeah we get it wrong but we are human beings, there'll be days when we aren't right and there'll be days when we're aggressive and there'll be days when we

lose our temper, but on the whole I think people do see us a reasonable service and they know they need us, they know they need us to succeed and that's policing by consent. So I think that's the legitimacy that we're given, not just because we enforce the law. It's because we help when we don't, I mean we deal with about 120,000 crimes a year, we deal with 10,000 sudden

deaths, and there were 7,000 road traffic collisions, some of what we do is crime but as much of what we're doing which has nothing at all to do with crime but we help people in emergencies and both are really important. When people need help, if we're there, it gives us that opportunity to help them when sometimes they need it.

Mark Johnson

So back on the sort of the guns and weapons sort of crime, what do you think are the biggest drivers behind it? Why do you think, you know, what do you think is behind people carrying guns and knives within the communities?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

My impression is, is that over the years there have been more gun crime. The majority as you all know is that over 50 percent of it is based in London, Birmingham and Manchester

and we're fourth by some way but we are a significant fourth, about five percent more gun crime, and it certainly has increased over the years. My view is, is that the number of guns generally has gone up, the number, you know, around has gone up. In the past it was said that a gun was shared around, I don't think that's as necessary now and I think that's why it's drifting now to youngsters.

Chair - Cherie Booth

So a bigger supply?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

Yeah and so therefore, you know, the organised criminal who would keep it for the threat, who would keep it, you know, for status, there are now more of them around so they are selling them between them and you're seeing young people get hold of them because there's not that same restriction because the supply has increased. Now why the supply has increased I think is a bit of a debate. I mean you could put it down to [INAUDIBLE] borders I mean there's certainly been mass migration over the years and as you see millions of people pass through borders it gets more and more difficult to actually challenge everybody, and all the goods that go with them. I mean we've seen, we've been involved you know in various military conflicts, that brings with it both the military and their suppliers will move across borders, and it means that, you know, there's always a risk that things will move with them, and it's an irony because obviously post-Dunblane handguns were banned, and I think that was a fantastic thing. But unfortunately the handgun remains the most prevalent type of gun that is used in a crime, although now we see 38 percent of our gun discharges are shotguns, so on the whole the majority are handguns but we still do see shotguns used. So my broad answer to your point about guns is that I think that the supply has gone up which allows them to drift down to too many people and therefore makes them available when in the past they would have had a fight, I'm afraid a gun is too available and they'll have an argument, they'll get the gun and come back.

Chair - Cherie Booth

So is banning guns a good way of restricting the supply?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

I think it could have been...

Chair - Cherie Booth

... you mentioned Dunblane and the [INAUDIBLE]

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

I mean I would, my heart says yes, my head says well it's debatable given that, you know, there have been so many handguns have been used in crimes post-Dunblane, but I think one of the difficulties I know by some of the guns we seize now are handguns, were guns that were deactivated post-Dunblane but the first level of deactivation was not sufficient to prevent any

later reactivation. So I think you've got a pool of weapons out there that came from that so from good intentions, good piece of legislation, got rid of them, but unfortunately there were still a pool hanging about and some people were able to re-activate, so we've seen some of that. We've seen some obviously coming from abroad, because now it's, you know, no longer illegal to hold

them here. So I'm certainly still of the opinion that banning handguns was a good idea, and I think it helps us to inhibit the amount of guns available, and of course the big argument post-Dunblane was a handgun is concealable and of course a shotgun generally, although they can be sawn off, and a rifle generally, you could see and you've got some chance of defending yourself.

So my view is that concealable weapons it's best to ban them.

Commissioner

Can I ask a question about, we're visiting a number of cities and one of the things we'll consider is what works on one area and what's not working in another area, and what's good over here, why could that not work there, if Merseyside comes a distant fourth to the other three cities that you talked about, and, you know, apart from size, the demographic

would seem to be similar, why is that? Is that because of you, a specifically well led Police Service...

Commissioner

[INAUDIBLE]

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

But it's, but it's not true. It's not true.

Commissioner

Obviously that's not your answer but... what is it, is it this, those other places are more lucrative markets for drug dealers and criminals?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

I'm not sure, I wouldn't make any great argument for is that because of our action we've kept ourself at fourth. I think broadly we've been fourth for a long time and all of us throughout the country have seen a gradual rise in the amount of gun crime, so I don't think we can really say that within our general crime reduction we've yet got all the gun crime in as much control as we would like. I'd like to see a Merseyside where we have not one discharge in a year, but that hasn't happened yet, until we get there it remains dangerous. Why you get that sort of disparity across the country, I'm not quite sure, I suspect London is a unique place, it's different, as you said at the beginning, it's different, different parts of the country, in Merseyside there is no racial element to, you know, different groups having guns generally where...

Chair - Cherie Booth

But they're normally younger aren't they?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

Well I don't think any younger than in London, but certainly our groups tend to be groups of

white youngsters, that's not to say there is no black person involved in gun crime, because we have had that, but if you were to say what's the theme, it has tended to be where we found most difficulty with young people tends to be white young gangs rather than black gangs. Now I

think in some of the other cities that's not always been the case. Now what the reason for that disparity is I wouldn't even try to, you know, to guess at cos I don't know, but I do know that's the difference here. You know, there are things about this area that I'm sure are different to Birmingham...

Commissioner

I would encourage you to start thinking about it because an answer to that question I think might have interesting national implications.

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

I think it's a good point, but I think it would need a really good set of research to try and work out cos I think the danger with that type of issue, particularly when you talk about race is that you leap to conclusions and sometimes I can give you professional judgement but I wouldn't, it's an area where I'd hesitate to step because I think you can send so many wrong messages and I

honestly don't know the answer. But I think we should probably know more than we do now.

Commissioner

They seem to be part of your total policing strategy, total intelligence about what's going on in Merseyside isn't it?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

I was gonna have to be beaten about the head by that, but I mean we do think we understand our criminality, part of our job at the moment is not to worry about Birmingham, is not to worry about Manchester, of course we collectively have a professional view and I think you're gonna talk to Keith Bristow who's the [INAUDIBLE] lead on violence and

firearms and Sue Fish, so probably they'll have a sort of an understanding across the country. But we think we understand it locally and it is around some youngsters who start off in terms of the gangs here, who start off being probably school based, start having disputes between schools, that becomes a gang and in the past that's all that happened and meandered off into life and grew up, but now probably sometimes they get involved in drug supply, sometimes a fight involves a firearm, and then suddenly it becomes not more complex, but certainly more threatening and dangerous. Now we've dedicated more resources on the back of that now so we've got a matrix group which is another name... but, you know, basically we think it's pretty unique in a country which is dedicated, half of it is dedicated to detectives who covertly target the people with guns, and the other half target those people we haven't got enough resource to get round to, we disrupt their lives as much as we can. So, you know, if we think they're gonna carry a gun we will stop them as often as we can, and some may say that is harassment, I'm afraid the danger elements where a gun in the hand of a youngster is so dangerous we've gotta do something, we can't just let, you know, things happen around us.

Commissioner

So you said, I mean... you know, this sounds like what the Police should be doing isn't it? Sort of targeting criminals, giving them a hard time within the law, trying to arrest them, put them away and help those who don't, have yet to put a gun in their hand to get the help from a social worker and go fishing and hiking and all of that, why is that not going on all around the country?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

I can't say it's not, you know, [INAUDIBLE] we're trying to say for the best that, you know, what we are doing and I'm sure you'll find gaps, maybe things we're not doing perfectly, we're not here to say that we're perfect, and there is never enough resources to go around, we'd always like more, but I think everybody will have their own approach, I think, you know, I've not gone right

through our philosophy of total policing, but the only idea was that, you know, we're all a team, there are only four and a half thousand Police Officers, we've 1.5 million people in Merseyside, that team had better be effective, so the teams gotta work together, we've gotta have effective tactics and we maximise our use of technology. Both that that is overt, the thing I've talked

about automatic number plate recognition is a great thing and no doubt the criminals will find a way around it eventually but until they do, we'd better make best use of it, and then on the covert side things that we don't talk about a lot, we've invested a lot in that technology as well, and we've applied some of that covert technology, which in the past we've reserved for the most

organised elements of criminality to the young, to the less organised, but frankly more threatening. Drugs crime kills people over 20 years, you know, if they're taking drugs and become addicted they die, unfortunately, later in life. A gun kills you now and the great realisation for us was we've gotta deal with those youngsters and the people who have guns and it's not complex, we

just have, they buy the gun, they keep it somewhere and then they shoot someone, it's not complex in its arrangements. So we've gotta make sure we are [INAUDIBLE] one of the biggest priorities cos otherwise somebody dies and it might be one of our Officers.

Commissioner

[TALKING OVER EACH OTHER – INAUDIBLE] your peers, I mean this is what we're doing, is it an environment in which you pass on good practice to other Police Forces?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

We do, and, you know, the [INAUDIBLE] committees are really good ways of doing that, and a lot of work that Keith Bristow's pulled together, and [INAUDIBLE] is a great opportunity as well for working internationally, and also nationally. I mean the guns that are fired in Merseyside and Manchester may not have been sourced from here, so for me to interact I'm gonna pick a

name out of the blue so forgive me, but Dorset Wiltshire, that may be the source of the weapon, we've gotta work together, and I think it's a great opportunity, together we're the serious and organised crime agency, I think that's another national body that we can work

with, and the second dimension for me is the international. Where these weapons are coming from outside, we have to have some national arrangement to have international relationships, to make sure that if they are coming from, I'll not name the countries, but there are some that I know and that where that risk is we need to work through Government, with the Governments of the other countries and their law enforcement agencies because if we know that they're coming from another country we struggle to intervene, we can't work on the mistakes in Liverpool and Mosley and then intervene in the middle of France of another country, you know.

Chair - Cherie Booth

So total policing you feel is the way ahead, it's working, you're happy with that approach, what's next? What do you think the next thing you would like to see happen in Liverpool to reduce crime and gun crime in particular?

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

I think there's, around violence I think there is something that I would say that, I mentioned, and we've talked a little about drugs I think, you know, wherever you've got an open street market in drugs quite often that leads to violence and force the immediate where young people's behaviour is badly affected by the drugs and the sale leads to turf disputes and that breeds violence, so I think if you can attack the street market that's a great way into it, and the other one is alcohol. Either you think anti-social behaviour has got worse over the years, or something else happened to society and I, my own view is two things happened. One is that people can ring us more easily, I'm old enough to remember when my mum if she had a problem with kids on the street, had to walk past them to get to the phone box at the end of the street, it did work, so usually she sorted it out herself, and many other people would probably do the same, but now they just get hold of the phone and they will ring us, quite properly, so the number of calls goes up, so that allows for some of the increase I think. But I think the other thing for me is the aggravated effect of alcohol and I honestly think that the relative price drop, and the area I would target most, it's not a generic supply of alcohol, that's not in itself bad I don't think,

it's the off licence and I honestly think that the volume of off licence outlets has increased to a point where both the companies who run them can't monitor them in the way they would like to,

and we suffer as do the Local Authorities because if you've got 50 outlets you know the bad guys and we'll concentrate on them, if you've got 2000 it's difficult. So every night we've got a lot to do. We've got these, all these calls coming in and if you just think about what happens, some of them, I think they're called grog shops on some of the Estates, you can now get multiple

grog shops in an Estate, they're competing for the same business and they are a point of sale is monitored and controlled by probably a young person, probably badly paid and when the gang turns up at ten o'clock and say we're gonna take, are you gonna, you know, would we challenge them, there's an

18 year old or 19 year old on your own in a shop at night so the point of sale has moved from the off licence and the pub and the club to these points of sale. It's not only those, the supermarkets also fail sometimes, so generally my feeling is that we could go back to what used to be a needs test in the off licence provisions which says well does this area need an off licence and are

you a fit person. The test now is are you a fit person, is for you to decide whether you can make money, and I think that drives competitiveness, it devolves control low, to a low level and the relative price means that kids don't have to steal to get the money, they get it from, you know, usual sources really, not in an illegal way and then you get a gang of kids with alcohol, even

a Police Officer can struggle to intervene. You get 40 of them gathered together, they're not gonna respect you in the way we talked about earlier, you try and intervene it become a conflict. Now I think that's not a healthy situation and for me that's a big thing that I think collectively, not just in Liverpool, we can do something about.

Chair - Cherie Booth

So that's an example of a law of unintended consequences. Chief Constable and Assistant Chief Constable of Merseyside, thank you for sharing with us your experiences here.

Chief Constable Bernard Hogan Howe

Thank you.

Chair - Cherie Booth

Thank you.