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Thank you for your letter of 21 October to the Home Secretary about knife crime. I am replying as the Minister of State for Crime and Policing.

I was deeply saddened to hear about the abhorrent circumstances in which Hazrat Wali was killed and I recognise the devastating impact that knife crime and serious violence has had on his family, friends and the wider community in which he lived.

I want to take this opportunity to assure you that tackling knife crime is a priority for this Government. We are clear about the inherent seriousness of offences involving knives and are determined to do all we can to protect communities and see that knife crime offenders are brought to justice. The Government remains extremely concerned by knife crime, and the corresponding increase in the number of victims of violent crime. This is appalling and as long people are dying and their families and communities suffering, we will do all we can to bring an end to this violence.

You have mentioned policing in your constituency. We are increasing the number of police officers in England and Wales by 20,000 by March 2023. An additional 20,000 officers sends a clear message that we are committed to giving police the resources they need to tackle the scourge of crime. The increase over three years is unprecedented and reflects the biggest recruitment drive in decades. These 20,000 extra officers will be on top of recruitment to cover retirement and those leaving the police.

As a result of their hard work and commitment, police forces in England and Wales have recruited 11,053 additional officers as at 30 September 2021. This is 55% of the 20,000 officer target and I am extremely grateful to those brave men and women who have signed up to join the police and keep our communities safe. Also as at 30 September, the Metropolitan Police Service has recruited 2,070 additional officers against a total recruitment target of 2,713 by March 2022. The deployment of these officers is an operational decision for the Mayor of London and the Commissioner.

We are supporting the police every step of the way to tackle knife crime and we have given them more powers and resources to go after criminals and take knives and other dangerous weapons off our streets. On 4 February 2021, the Government published a total police funding settlement of up to £15.8 billion in 2021/22, an increase of up to £636 million compared to 2020/21. The Metropolitan Police Service's funding will be up to

£3072.3 million in 2021/22, an increase of up to £132.4 million on the 2020/21 police funding settlement.

We have also committed £130.5 million to tackle serious violence and homicide in 2021/22, including funding for targeted policing and interventions to protect young people from involvement in violence. The £130.5 million includes the £35.5 million for Violence Reduction Units which draw together partners in 18 areas worst affected by serious violence in England and Wales to deliver coordinated action to tackle violence at its root.

As part of the £130.5 million we have committed an extra £30 million to support the police in taking targeted action in parts of England and Wales most affected by serious violence, and up to £23 million for new early intervention programmes that will help stop young people from being drawn into violence. This includes programmes which use significant moments in a young person's life – such as when they enter police custody or Accident and Emergency – as well as opportunities for trained professionals to gain a greater understanding of the prevalence and pervasive impact of different types of trauma that may have been faced by the children and young people they work with.

We also think we can do more to help the police target those who have already been convicted of knife or offensive weapon offences and who persist in unlawfully carrying a knife or a weapon with the intention to commit more violence. We have introduced Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs) in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts (PCSC) Bill which will give the police powers to make it easier to stop and search those already convicted of knife and offensive weapon offences. Through the PCSC bill, we have also introduced legislation which will place new duties on a range of specified agencies across different sectors, such as local government, youth offending, and health and probation, to work collaboratively, share data and information, and put in place plans to prevent and reduce serious violence.

Through the Prime Minister's Crime and Justice Task Force, the Government has made it clear that the focus on enforcement must be matched with a focus on prevention and early intervention. To help drive the cross-government strategic response to serious violence we are therefore taking action across a range of services including children's social care, education, and investing £200 million in a Youth Endowment Fund, to ensure those most at risk are given the opportunity to turn away from violence and lead positive lives.

We continue to ensure that tackling knife crime is a government priority. Thank you again for taking the time to write to me about this issue.



Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP