



WEAPONS COURT HELP REDUCE VIOLENCE IN INVERCLYDE

A pioneering weapons court is helping to reduce levels of violence in Inverclyde.

Since it was established in June 2005, local police have recorded a 29.5 per cent drop in serious violent crime involving weapons.

A first in Scotland, the weapons court sits every fortnight in Greenock Sheriff Court. It aims to fast track offenders who have been charged with carrying knives or other offensive weapons.

Latest statistics show that the initiative – a joint effort between Strathclyde Police, the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service and the Scottish Court Service – is already proving a success.

The number of serious assaults in Inverclyde fell from 97 between June to December in 2004, to 62 during the same period in 2005, while serious assaults involving knives and other weapons fell from 37 to 23 during the same period.


Sub Divisional Officer, Superintendent David Stewart from Greenock Police Office, said:

“It is still very early days, however, these initial results are extremely encouraging. We have seen a substantial drop in levels of violent crime recorded in the Inverclyde area.

“Clearly any reduction in violence is to be welcomed, however, we are not complacent and we will continue to work with our partners to continue with this positive downward trend.”

The Inverclyde Weapons Initiative was established after growing concern about an apparent weapons culture in the local area. Research revealed that the vast proportion of violent crime in the area was committed using some type of weapon from knives to golf clubs.

The initiative aimed to reduce violent crime involving weapons, reduce weapon carrying and reduce the time taken from arrest to sentence.



Robust procedures were put in place to ensure the initiative – which cost nothing apart from the stakeholders’ time – was successful. Police ensured that anyone caught using or carrying a weapon was either detained in custody until the next lawful day or liberated with an undertaking to attend the next weapons court. While the Procurator Fiscal ensured that appropriate bail conditions were attached to disposals on request from the police and that the relevant Fiscal Depute was aware of all the circumstances of the case.

To ensure a consistent and informed approach, it is normally the same Sheriff who presides over the weapons court. There is excellent co-operation and information sharing between the agencies and they meet on a monthly basis to ensure the initiative maintains its momentum.

Superintendent Stewart added:

“Overall, violent crime has fallen, the use of weapons in violent crime has fallen and the number of people caught carrying weapons in Inverclyde, has also fallen. The vast majority of offenders are reported as custody or undertaking and are now dealt with swiftly and consistently with the result being minimal re-offending.”