

A guide to knife harm for parents and carers

Facts to help you feel more confident when talking to your child about knife harm, as well as practical help and guidance, and where to find support.



If you're worried your child is involved in knife crime

It can be extremely worrying to think that your child is involved in something as dangerous as knife crime.

They may not be carrying a weapon themselves but are associated with people who are. The natural reaction is to panic – but this won't resolve the situation and could push your child away.

Whatever the reason a young person is involved in knife crime, it is likely to have something to do with fear. Even if they don't admit it, a young person getting involved in weapons will be frightened, and continuously looking over their shoulder. They will be waiting for the police to stop and search them, or to be confronted by others, and in the end will be grateful for a 'way out' of that lifestyle.

This guide is designed to help provide a glossary of facts, practical advice as well as tips on how to speak to your child about the dangers associated with carrying a knife and where you can seek further help or support.



What you can do

Learn about the Law:

- It is an offence to carry a knife* in a public place (such as a road or in a school) or to carry any article which has a blade or is sharply pointed.
- It is an offence to carry an offensive weapon in a public place. This includes any article made, adapted, or intended for causing injury as detailed below:
 - Made: Made to cause injury, such as a knuckle duster or bayonets
 - Adapted: Something innocent that has been adapted to cause injury, such as a broken bottle or a chair leg with nails
 - Intended: Anything else, such as an umbrella or pen that is intended by the person to be used to cause injury to others
- Carrying a knife includes in your hand, a pocket, in the boot of your car or if someone else is carrying a knife for you.
- Exceptions include if you are carrying the knife as part of your job, such as a tool for a trade. However, forgetfulness, ignorance to the law or general self-defence (protection) are not reasonable excuses if you are caught carrying a knife.
- It is an offence to use any knife in a threatening way (even a legal knife)
- It is an offence to sell a knife to anyone under 18

* Unless it has a folding blade 3 inches long or less. A list of illegal knives can be found here: [gov.uk/buying-carrying-knives](https://www.gov.uk/buying-carrying-knives)

To test your knowledge on the law you can also download the Ben Kinsella Trust's free [Knife Wise App](#). This app is an interactive quiz created by the Ben Kinsella Trust to test your understanding of the links between choices and consequences.

Make your child aware of the consequences:

- Carrying a weapon increases the risk of them being injured themselves.
- They could go to jail for up to 4 years if they're found in possession of a knife, even if they're carrying it for someone else.
- They will get a criminal record, which could stop them entering university or getting a job, and places restrictions on countries that they can travel to, such as the USA, Australia and Canada.
- In a worst-case scenario, they could end up using the weapon and seriously hurting someone.



Talk to the parents of your child's friends:

- If you're worried, parents of your child's friends probably are too. They may see your child in different places, hanging out with different friends and could help you get a better understanding of the situation
- By working together, you could raise awareness of the issue.

Practical tips on identifying knife crime

- Know what knives and how many you have in the kitchen and in toolkits at home.
- Monitor any unusual online purchases arriving at your home. Online retailers and delivery companies should ask for age verification when they deliver or when they ask you to collect age restricted goods.
- Keep engaged with your child or young person and their use of social media.
- Think about searching their bag and room (is there evidence of drugs, extra money, or new clothes?). Think of other hiding spaces that may be used in your home and remember it might not be a knife but some other weapon.
- Know where they are and who they are with (do they have a new circle of friends and are they becoming less engaged with their family?).
- Encourage them to 'hang out' in safe areas wherever possible and talk to your child about places they can go if they are feeling vulnerable.

How to dispose of a knife

- Before disposing of a knife, make sure to wrap it securely to avoid injury.
- You can dispose of a knife at your local police station. Some local authorities and charities offer knife amnesty bins and these may be placed in prominent locations in your local area. Search online to see what's available in your local area.

There are many reasons for children to decide to carry a knife or weapon

This list is not exhaustive but gives reasons why children and young people may carry knives.

- They fear being a victim of knife crime – this could be from a specific threat, or a perceived fear, and are carrying the knife for protection. This is the most common reason that young people give us for knife carrying.
- General self-defence – the ‘just in case’ reason.
- They may feel marginalised or alienated.
- Peer pressure or being pressured into carrying it for someone else.
- They don’t know it’s wrong or they don’t know it’s illegal.
- To intimidate others (by way of protection).
- To earn respect or street cred.
- There may also be some involvement in other criminal activities.



Having the conversation with your child

Speaking to your child or young person about knife crime requires a direct, and frank conversation. Here is some guidance you may find useful.

Getting Started

Find the right time. The conversation needs to take place wherever they feel safest, which could be inside the family home. Be available and ready to listen, as well as reassuring them that they can be honest with you and let them know you are not there to judge them.

Listen

Don't expect or demand them to talk. If they do, be patient and try not to react straight away to what they tell you. Give them the voice in this conversation and don't rush to give advice that they may not be ready to hear. Be empathic.

Encourage them to share their fears

Create a non-judgemental and empathic relationship as this will enable your child to share their fears and feelings. This will help you to better understand their situation.

Be Positive

Show them that they are being listened to. Reassure them that the vast majority of young people don't carry a knife. If they are fearful of someone or something specific, tell them that it can be dealt with without the need for them to carry a knife.

Stick to the facts

They might not think you know what you're talking about so a little preparation can really help here.

Be clear about false 'bravery'

Walking away from confrontation or a fight is the braver thing to do. If someone pulls a knife on them, the safest and wisest thing to do is to run away. Young people fear backlash from their peers, and fear being targeted by a wider group for not stepping up to a situation or individual. Remind them that this moment will pass, and attention will move away from them in time.



The impact

Help them reflect on how their actions could affect the people who care for them the most. Using a knife is only the beginning. It could place others at risk of being brought into the situation against their will. If they were injured, who will be affected?

Be realistic

If you start the conversation, be prepared to hear answers you might not like.

Your child may feel you have no experience of knife crime or the challenges they face. Are there any examples from your own childhood that you can draw upon? Has there been anything in the news recently or something that's happened locally that you can refer to?

Suggest alternatives


Find out about safe, fun activities for children and young people in your local area by searching the internet or your local council's website. Ask other parents and local community leaders about activities and safe spaces they know about in your local area.

Try something different.

It doesn't have to just be a conversation; you know your children and what they respond to best. Try thinking beyond a 'chat' and try helping them understand the risks with knives.

Get help and support for yourself

It may be that you learn some worrying things about your child and the things they're involved in. Try not to overreact but don't feel you have to deal with this on your own – help is available



You can find more free information and learning resources on this subject matter at benkinsula.org.uk/resources

Here are some facts to help you feel more confident when talking to your child

Getting caught with a knife

If you get caught with a knife, even if it was for your own protection or you were carrying it for someone else, you will be arrested and prosecuted. See page 3.

Stop and search

Police can and will search you if they believe you are carrying a knife.

Prison

If you get caught with a knife you can be sentenced to prison of up to 4 years – even if you have no intention to use the knife.

Joint enterprise

If someone is injured or killed by a knife in your presence, you could be prosecuted even if did not commit the crime. You could be sent to prison for murder in what is referred to as 'joint enterprise'.

Alcohol

Alcohol will lower your inhibitions and increases the chances that you will take a risk.

Knife crime can kill

There is no 'safe place' to stab someone. A wound to the arm or leg can still be life threatening. A small blade can be enough to cut an artery leading to death within minutes.

Criminal record

If you have a criminal record, you might not be accepted into a college or university, get a job, or travel to some countries, like the USA, Canada or Australia.



Services and support for young people and families and how to report a crime

The Ben Kinsella Trust

Free learning resources and information for parents, teachers, practitioners, and young people <https://benkinsella.org.uk/resources/>

Citizens Advice

If your child has been illegally sold a knife, you can report this to Trading Standards on **03454 04 05 06** or visit <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/get-more-help/report-to-trading-standards/>

Crimestoppers

Is an independent charity that gives you the power to speak up to stop crime, 100% anonymously. Telephone: **0800 555 111**
Website: www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Childline

Your child can call Childline on **0800 1111** at any time if they are worried about their own safety.

Family Lives

Gives advice on all aspects of parenting and is open 24/7. Calls are free on **0808 800 2222** or visit familylives.org.uk

Fearless

Fearless is a service that allows young people to pass on information about crime 100% anonymously. <https://www.fearless.org/>

NSPCC

NSPCC (The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children): Their helpline provides information and advice to parents and others concerned about young people who may be involved or affected by gang activity. Their helpline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Freephone: **0808 800 5000**. Email: help@nspcc.org.uk Web: nspcc.org.uk/gangs

The Police

To find details of your local team and find out more about the work they are doing in your area, type your postcode at www.police.uk. You should call 101 to report crime and other concerns that do not require an emergency response. Call **999** in an emergency.

The Princes Trust

Support for families and young people (11-30 years old) <https://www.princes-trust.org.uk>

Victim Support

A national charity which helps people affected by crime. Web: victimsupport.org

The Ben Kinsella Trust

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