

Pol-Ed®

Keeping Children Safe

Knife Crime Information for Parents and Carers

Knife Crime: Keeping Safe
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Many parents and carers worry about knife crime and how it might affect their child. News reports and social media can make these concerns feel even greater, particularly if incidents have happened locally. Although knife crime has fallen in recent years, many families still understandably worry about their child's safety.

What does the law say?

It is illegal to carry a knife, blade, sharply pointed item or any offensive weapon in a public place without a valid reason, and carrying something for "protection" is not a legal defence.



- This includes items carried in a bag, vehicle or on behalf of someone else.
- Offensive weapons can be items designed, adapted or intended to cause injury.
- It is also illegal to use a weapon in a threatening way or to sell most knives and weapons to anyone under 18.
- Convictions can have serious consequences, affecting education, employment and future opportunities.



Why might a child decide to carry a knife?



- Some young people carry a knife because they believe their friends or other young people are doing the same.
- They may worry about fitting in or feel pressure to match others' behaviour, or they may also carry a knife because they want to fit in or avoid appearing vulnerable.



- They may be influenced/misled by the media and believe it is what their peers do.
- Frequently, they fear being a victim of a knife attack so therefore carry a knife for protection, often without any intention of using the knife.

As parents, concerns about knife crime can be worrying. Young people may believe that carrying a knife will keep them safe, but carrying a weapon can increase the risk of serious harm and may result in it being used against them.

Weapons and child exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is a form of abuse where children are manipulated, pressured or forced into criminal activity for someone else's benefit. People who exploit children often build trust by offering friendship, attention, money, gifts or a sense of protection before expecting something in return. As part of this, some children may be drawn into carrying drugs, money or weapons. If a young person is carrying a knife, it may be a sign that they are being exploited, feel unsafe, or are being pressured by others.

Warning signs of exploitation can include...

Unexplained money or gifts, changes in behaviour, new or older friendship groups, increased secrecy, staying out late, going missing, travelling to unfamiliar places, or carrying items such as phones, drugs or weapons for others. These signs do not always indicate exploitation, but they may suggest a child needs extra support.



Knife crime and the media

Some young people may spend time on social media platforms, video games and listening to music that portrays and sometimes glamorises violence, including knife crime. As a parent/carer this can be difficult to navigate, you may have concerns about the content that your child is consuming but also face pressure to allow them access to these platforms so they don't feel 'left out'. Violent online content does not automatically lead to violent behaviour. However, if a young person regularly engages with this content, it can affect how normal or acceptable violence appears. Online platforms also tend to recommend similar content, meaning exposure can increase over time.

Myths about knife crime

Most young people carry knives.
Reality: The vast majority of young people never carry a knife.

Carrying a knife makes someone safer.
Reality: Carrying a knife increases the risk of serious injury and can lead to criminal consequences.

Knife crime only affects certain communities.
Reality: Exploitation and violence can affect children from any background.



Talking to your child about knife crime

- Stay engaged with your child's online life and create opportunities to talk about what they watch, listen to and share.
- Discuss how social media, videos and music can sometimes exaggerate or glamorise violence for attention, views or popularity, and help them think critically about the messages being shared.
- Open communication, alongside appropriate parental controls and age settings, can help young people make informed and safer choices online.
- Talk to your child about why some young people choose to carry a knife. Often, they do so because they are afraid of being attacked and want to feel protected, rather than use it.

If knife crime is a concern, try to create opportunities for regular, open conversations rather than relying on one serious discussion. Choose a calm moment, be curious about their experiences and listen without rushing to judge or solve the problem. Asking simple questions about safety, friendships, social media or what young people in their area think about knife carrying can help start a meaningful conversation. If your child shares concerns or mistakes, focus first on understanding how they are feeling.

Children are often more likely to ask for help when they feel understood and know they will not be judged. Building trust and keeping communication open can make it easier for them to come to you if they ever feel scared, pressured or unsafe.

Questions could include:

- I saw something recently about knife crime and it made me wonder what young people think about it. What's your view?
- Are there any places where young people your age avoid going?
- What do people your age think about knife crime?
- How easy is it for someone to say no if their friends expect them to do something?
- Have you ever seen online arguments spill over into real life?



While it is important not to become overly suspicious, staying involved in your child's life can help you spot concerns early. Maintaining an awareness of your child's routines, friendships and wellbeing can help you spot concerns early. It can also be useful to know what sharp tools and knives are kept in the home and to take notice if any cannot be accounted for.

What can parents/carers do?

If you are concerned that your child may be carrying a knife, experiencing exploitation or feeling unsafe, try to stay calm and talk to them openly. Seek advice from your child's school, safeguarding lead, youth workers or local support services. If there is an immediate risk to a child's safety, contact the police on 999.

Remember, most young people do not carry knives, and most will never become involved in knife crime. Strong relationships, open communication and trusted adults remain some of the most effective ways to keep children safe.



Further support and information

Remind your child that they can always speak to a trusted adult if they feel unsafe, worried or pressured.
As well as talking to a parent / carer or teacher, support is also available through Childline, NSPCC and CEOP.

Ben Kinsella Trust
www.benkinsella.org.uk
Provides information about knife crime, exploitation, personal safety and resources specifically designed for parents, carers and schools.

Let's Be Blunt
www.letsbeblunt.co.uk
Provides information and practical guidance to help reduce knife-related harm, including advice for parents and carers on knife safety in the home, safer knife design and everyday actions that can help prevent violence.

NSPCC
www.nspcc.org.uk
Advice on child criminal exploitation, online safety, gangs and wider safeguarding concerns.

Fearless
www.fearless.org
Information for young people and parents about crime, exploitation and staying safe, with anonymous reporting options.

The Children's Society
www.childrenssociety.org.uk
Provides information on child criminal exploitation, county lines and supporting vulnerable young people.

Ivison Trust
www.ivisontrust.org.uk
Specialist support and advice for parents concerned about child exploitation.

Childline
www.childline.org.uk
Advice and support for children and young people who may be worried about their own safety or that of a friend.

In an emergency, call 999.