



# 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 and guidance, and where to find support.

This guide was produced in collaboration between the Ben Kinsella Trust and the Kent & Medway Violence Reduction Unit.



The **Ben Kinsella** Trust  
Stop Knife Crime





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

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



# What can you do?

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## **Learn about the law:**

- Carrying a knife or a gun is illegal.
- Police are legally allowed to use their powers to stop and search someone if they believe a weapon is being carried.
- Having a criminal record could stop your child gaining entry into a university, getting a job, and could even place restrictions on them travelling to some countries.

## **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 or 5 years for a gun, even if they're carrying it for someone else.
- In a worst case scenario, they could end up using the weapon and seriously hurting someone.
- There are tips and advice on how best to start this conversation with a young person about knives and knife harm below.

## **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

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- Know what blades you have in the kitchen and in toolkits at home.
- Keep an eye out for any online purchases for blades. Online retailers tend to run fewer checks on who is buying goods than shops, this is why it is a good idea to keep tabs on what packages are delivered to your home.
- Keep engaged with your kids and use 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.
- 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.
- Talk to your child about places they can go if they are feeling vulnerable. Information on youth centres across the County can be found at the end of this guide.

## **How to dispose of a knife**

- Before disposing of a knife, make sure to wrap it securely to avoid injury.
- Take the secured knife to disposal site at any of the Kent Police stations or use a knife amnesty bin.



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

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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.
- General self-defence – the ‘just in case’ reason.
- 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.
- There may also be some involvement in other criminal activities.



# The conversation

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**Speaking to your child or young person about knife crime requires a direct, and frank conversation. This is not the only way to have the conversation about weapons, but hopefully you can find some guidance.**

## **Getting started**

Be prepared by finding out more about knife crime at No Knives Better Lives ([noknivesbetterlives.com](http://noknivesbetterlives.com)). They have more than 10 years of experience in Scotland of helping parents to talk with their children about knives.

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.

## **Encourage them to share their fears.**

Try not to make it all about your fears as their parent, but where appropriate, share your own fears – tell them how much you worry about their safety and their future.

## **Stick to the facts**

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

## **Be positive**

Show them that they are being listened too. Reassure them that 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.

## **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 that 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.

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.

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

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## **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.

## **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 5 years – even if you have no intention to use the knife.

## **Keeping safe**

Some people say that they carry knives to protect themselves and ‘keep safe’. But hospital data shows that if you carry a knife you are much more likely to use it and to get stabbed yourself.

## **Joint enterprise**

If someone is injured or killed by a knife in your presence, you could be prosecuted even if it is not you who uses it. 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 of taking a risk.

## **Knife crime can kill**

There is no ‘safe place’ to stab someone. If you stab someone and cause a wound in the arm or the leg, this can still be life threatening. A penetration with a small blade can be enough to cut an artery leading to death.

## **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

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There are lots of local youth services that offer positive activities for young people to get involved in, in a safe and supportive environment.

## Kent

A list of youth centres and the activities they offer can be found on the KCC website for education and young people. Click on 'Early Help' to find your local youth centre.

The website also lists other support available to young people.

Website: [kent.gov.uk/education-and-children](https://kent.gov.uk/education-and-children)

Early Help: for advice, support and guidance you can contact KCC's Early Help service in your district. Go to the KELSIs website and type 'Early Help contacts' into the search bar to find your local Early Help contact details.

Website: [kelsi.org.uk](https://kelsi.org.uk)

## Safeguarding

If you are worried about the safety of your or another child or young person. Call **03000 41 11 11** or email [social.services@kent.gov.uk](mailto:social.services@kent.gov.uk)

## Medway

A list of youth centres, their opening times and the activities they offer can be found on the Medway website under 'Youth Programmes and Activities'. Website: [medway.gov.uk](https://medway.gov.uk)

Medway also offer early Help helplines which are there to offer advice and support whether you're a professional, a parent or a young person needing early help

- Chatham All Saints Children and Family Hub **01634 338 833**
- Gillingham Children and Family Hub: **01634 338 877**
- Strood Children and Family Hub **01634 335 533**
- Wayfield Children and Family Hub **01634 337 733**

Email: [ehsupport@medway.gov.uk](mailto:ehsupport@medway.gov.uk)

## Safeguarding

If you are worried about the safety of your or another child or young person, contact the Children's Services Contact Team **01634 334 466**.

# Other contacts and how to report a crime

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## **CrimeStoppers.**

**0800 555 111**

100% anonymous. Always.

## **Crimestoppers**

An independent charity that gives you the power to speak up to stop crime, 100% anonymously.

Telephone: **0800 555 111**

Website: [crimestoppers-uk.org](http://crimestoppers-uk.org)

## **missing people**

### **Safe Call**

A specialist team offer support to professionals, parents and young people on gang involvement.

Telephone: **0208 392 5710**

Website: [missingpeople.org.uk](http://missingpeople.org.uk)

## **NSPCC**

### **NSPCC**

Offers information and advice to people involved in gangs as well as families and friends who are concerned.

Telephone: **0808 800 5000**

Website: [nspcc.org.uk](http://nspcc.org.uk)

## **Kent Resilience Hub**

### **Kent Resilience Hub**

A resource that helps young people, parents and carers and practitioners to understand emotional wellbeing and resilience.

Website: [kentresiliencehub.org.uk](http://kentresiliencehub.org.uk)

## **kooth**

### **Kooth**

A free, safe and anonymous online counselling and emotional well-being platform available to all children and young people attending Kent secondary schools. The service provides online support and can be accessed through mobile, tablet and desktop.

Website: [kooth.com](http://kooth.com)

# Other contacts and how to report a crime

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## **Moodspark**

A place where young people aged 10-16 can learn how to look after their emotional and mental health and find ways to help them bounce back when life gets tough.

Website: [moodspark.org.uk](http://moodspark.org.uk)



## **The Ben Kinsella Trust**

We are one of the leading anti-knife crime charities in the UK, set up following the tragic murder of Ben Kinsella in 2008. Working with over 4,000 young people a year in our purpose built exhibitions, and help thousands more with our free, online resources.

Website: [benkinsella.org.uk](http://benkinsella.org.uk)

**No knives, better lives.**

## **No Knives Better Lives**

The website provides information for parents, young people and professionals on how to avoid harm from knives, and resources to help you talk about knives and weapons

Website: [noknivesbetterlives.com](http://noknivesbetterlives.com)



**Kent  
Police**

## **Kent Police**

To call the police use **999** in an emergency, or call **101** at other times.

# Glossary of terms

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## **Offensive weapons**

An offensive weapon is any that has been made, adapted or intended to cause harm. It is an offence to carry a knife or other offensive weapons without lawful authority or without a reasonable excuse. It is an offence to have any article in a public place which has a blade or sharp point.

## **Physical possession**

In a hand or pocket, or stuffed down a sock.

## **Constructive possession**

In the boot of a car, carried by someone else for them.

## **Public place**

Any road and any other premises or place to which at the material time the public have or are permitted to have access, whether on payment or otherwise.

## **Made to cause injury**

Knuckle duster, police baton, bayonets.

## **Adapted weapon**

This is anything innocent that has been adapted to cause injury, such as a broken bottle, discarded chair leg with nails etc.

## **Intended weapon**

This could be any item intended and/or used as a weapon, including (but not limited to) umbrellas, pens, etc.

## **Blade/s**

Any bladed article can be classes as a blade, this includes kitchen knives, scissors, craft knife or any other article with a cutting edge or blade.

## **Sharply pointed**

Needles, nails and screws etc.



The Kent & Medway Violence Reduction Unit is a multi-agency partnership using a public health approach to tackle violent crime in our communities. It was set up with money which the Police and Crime Commissioner received from the Home Office.



**Kent** Fire &  
Rescue Service



**Kent**  
Police



**Medway**  
COUNCIL  
*Serving You*

 Public Health  
England

**Kent**  
County  
Council  
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