

A young person with a backpack is seen from behind, covering their eyes with their hand. They are standing on a street with cars in the background. The image has a blue tint.

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 and been adapted for use by the Avon and Somerset Violence Reduction Partnership.



Avon & Somerset

**Violence
Reduction
Partnership**

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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 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?

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

- 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. Search UKCIS Social media guide for parents and carers for more information.
- Think about searching their bag and room (is there evidence of drugs, extra money, or new clothes?).
- Think of other hiding places 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 area 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.
- There are several surrender bins for knives and bladed articles located across Avon and Somerset. If you have a knife you would like to dispose of safely and anonymously, you can place them in one of the dedicated surrender bins. For a full list visit www.avonandsomerset.police.uk

THERE ARE MANY REASONS WHY A CHILD MAY DECIDE TO CARRY A KNIFE

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

- 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

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](https://www.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.

THE CONVERSATION

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.

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.

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

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 anyone they believe is carrying a knife.

PRISON

If you get caught with a knife you can be sentenced to prison for 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



If you are worried about a child or young person who could be in danger, please contact:

CRIMESTOPPERS

CrimeStoppers is an independent charity, that provide anyone with information on a crime the ability to report it 100% anonymously. They are open 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year and do not record calls or track IP addresses. This means that once you hang up the phone or press send, the only person who will know you contacted them, is you. If you have information that will help the police investigate a crime call Crimestoppers on:



0800 555111



www.crimestoppers-uk.org anonymously.

FEARLESS.ORG

Like CrimeStoppers but specifically for young people to report what they know, not who they are.



0800 555111



crimestoppers-uk.org/fearless anonymously

SAFE CALL

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



0208 392 5710



missingpeople.org.uk

NSPCC

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




0808 800 5000



nspcc.co.uk

KOOTH

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

OTHER CONTACTS AND HOW TO REPORT A CRIME

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.



 benkinsella.org.uk

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

 noknivesbetterlives.com

AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE

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



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Our Avon and Somerset VRP operates as a hub-and-spoke model, with the five Local Authorities having their own dedicated VRP Coordinator, who works closely with their specialist Early Intervention Police Team and key partners. Together they work to implement tailored interventions to tackle serious violence. Click on the QR codes to find out more.

Somerset



**Violence
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E-mail: communitysafetyteam@somerset.gov.uk



Bath & North East Somerset



**Violence
Reduction
Partnership**

E-mail: VRP_Admin@bathnes.gov.uk



South Gloucestershire



**Violence
Reduction
Partnership**

E-mail: vrp@southglos.gov.uk



North Somerset



**Violence
Reduction
Partnership**

E-mail: VRP@n-somerset.gov.uk



Bristol



**Violence
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E-mail: Safer_options@bristol.gov.uk



GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ADAPTED WEAPON

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

CONSTRUCTIVE POSSESSION

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

INTENDED WEAPON

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

MADE TO CAUSE INJURY

Knuckle duster, police baton, bayonets.

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

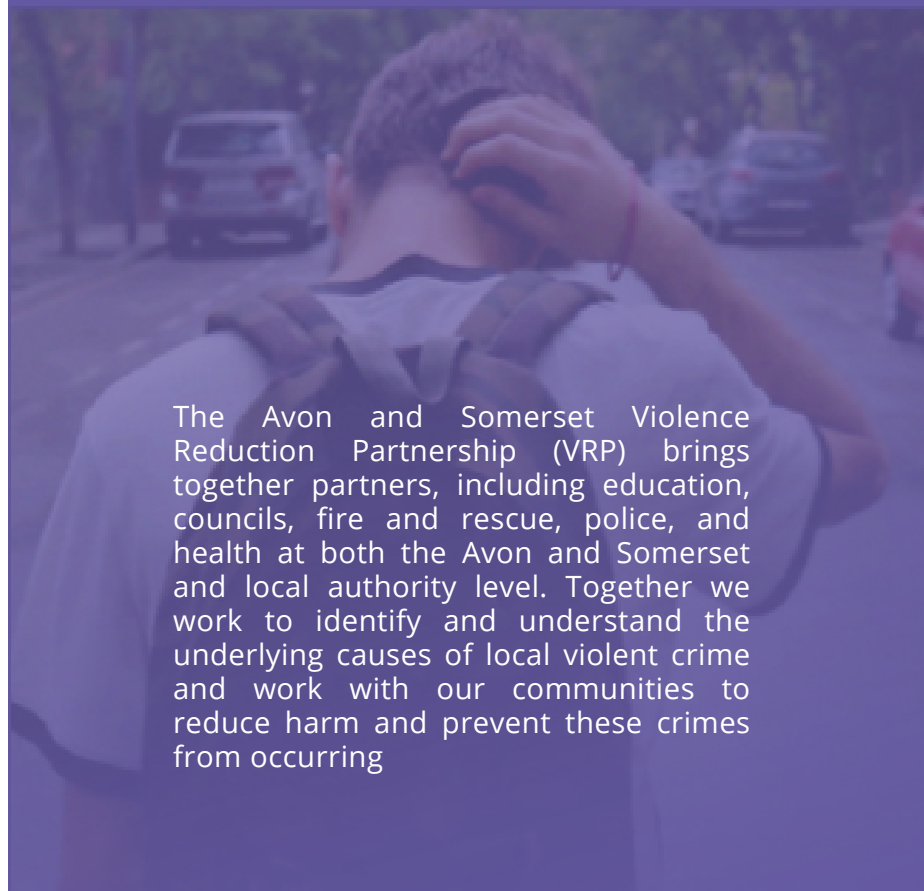
In a hand or pocket or stuffed down a sock.

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.

SHARPLY POINTED

Needles, nails and screws etc.



The Avon and Somerset Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) brings together partners, including education, councils, fire and rescue, police, and health at both the Avon and Somerset and local authority level. Together we work to identify and understand the underlying causes of local violent crime and work with our communities to reduce harm and prevent these crimes from occurring

We would like to thank The Ben Kinsella Trust and Kent and Medway VRU for sharing this information with us and helping support communities who are effected by knife crime.



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