

Spot the signs

- 1 Have they become withdrawn from the family and/or school?
- 2 Is their school or college reporting worrying changes in behaviour, academic achievement or attendance?
- 3 Have they lost interest in positive activities such as sports clubs?
- 4 Do they stay out unusually late without giving a reason and are vague about their whereabouts?
- 5 Have they stopped seeing old friends and started hanging out with a new group, potentially older and whom you may suspect are involved in gangs?
- 6 Are they secretive about the contents of their bag?
- 7 Are they defensive if you ask what is in their possession or if they are hiding anything?
- 8 Has their attitude changed about carrying knives/weapons? For example, justifying it by saying people carry them for self-defence?
- 9 Have any items gone missing from the kitchen, tool box or garage?
- 10 Have you found a weapon hidden amongst their possessions?
- 11 Have they been a recent victim of theft/ bullying/mugging

Basic Laws on Knives

It's illegal to:

- sell a knife to anyone under 18, unless it has a folding blade 3 inches long (7.62 cm) or less
- carry a knife in public without good reason, unless it has a folding blade with a cutting edge 3 inches long or less
- carry, buy or sell any type of banned knife
- use any knife in a threatening way (even a legal knife)
- carry a lock knife in public without good reason. Lock knives are knives with blades that can be locked and re-folded only by pressing a button (can include multi-tool knives).

Police can and will search someone if they believe they are carrying a knife. Police and school staff can also search young people, **and their belongings**, for weapons at school, **with or without their consent**.

Carrying a knife could mean being arrested, going to court and ending up with a criminal record or even a prison sentence.

Having a criminal record can prevent that person getting a job, going to university or college or even travelling abroad to some countries.

Having the Conversation

Have a chat with your kids and see what they think about carrying a knife. Reassure them that they can be honest with you and let them know you'll support them without judgement, no matter what.

This can be a tricky conversation – your child may be scared or unwilling to talk about this. But it is never a bad thing to talk and it's important to be clear that your child does have a choice, even when they think they may not.

Think about raising these points with your child;

By carrying a knife you;

- have a false sense of security
- could be arming your attacker, increasing the risk of being stabbed or injured (**one in 3 knife injuries are caused by the person's own knife**)
- are breaking the law

Not carrying, and walking away from confrontation;

- is what the vast majority do
- is the tougher thing to do
- means you'll be safer from serious harm and not breaking the law.

Your child may be reluctant or scared to talk at first - it's a difficult subject.

Be patient and try not to react straight away to what they tell you. Let them talk as much as they want to first.

Get Support

Encourage them to share their fears and worries.

Sharing your own fears can help - tell them how much you worry about their safety and their future.

Be positive - Let them know that they do have a choice in what they do, even though it may seem like they don't.

Make them aware that vast majority of young people don't carry a knife.

Raise the point that walking away from confrontation or a fight is the braver thing to do.

If someone pulls a knife on them, the safest, wisest thing to do is to walk away.

In ten years time, nobody will remember they walked, but if they 'stand their ground' the consequences could last a lifetime or even end someone's life.

If you do have further concerns about someone you care about carrying a knife, there are many organisations available who can offer further help, support and advice.

You can contact your local council for a list of local groups and organisations who can offer advice, as well as information on setting up your own group.

Parentline plus – a national charity that works for and with parents. Call free on **0808 8002222** or log on to **www.parentlineplus.org.uk**

Victim Support – national charity giving help to you and your child if they have been a victim of knife crime. **www.victimsupport.org**, tel. **0845 3030900**.

Crime stoppers – make safe and anonymous reports via **0800 555111** or **<http://crimestoppers-uk.org/>**



www.westyorkshire.police.uk/stopknifecrime

Knife Crime Support for Parents #StopKnifeCrime



Knife and offensive weapon offending has a devastating effect on individuals, families and communities. Injuries, fatalities, criminal convictions, feeling threatened - the effects of knife crime are a huge source of worry for parents.

Have the conversations, know the facts and help your children make positive choices.