

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 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.



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.
- 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. View the list of Islington Safe Havens.
www.islington.gov.uk/findasafehaven

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 Islington Police stations or use a knife amnesty bin.

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.
- 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

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.

Be positive

Show them that they are being listened to. 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.

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 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. See list of Islington youth provision www.islington.gov.uk/youthclubs

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

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 in Islington

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

Islington FIS (Family Information Service) is a free information and advice service for families with children and young people aged between 0-25. The service can provide you with information about: childcare, things to do, after-school clubs, services for disabled children, youth clubs and adventure play, health, family support services, tax credits, and any other issues relating to family life. You can contact them via:

Telephone: 020 7527 5959

E-mail: fis@islington.gov.uk

Website: www.islington.gov.uk/fis

Islington also offers a range of parenting programmes and courses for parents to be and parents and carers with children aged 0-19 who either live in Islington or have children attending Islington schools.

For more information visit:
www.islington.gov.uk/parentingprogrammes

Izzy Info the website for young people, packed with information and advice, details of local youth organisations, plus things to do and places to go.

Website: izzy-info.com

Other contacts and how to report a crime

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

Safeguarding: If you are worried about the safety of your or another child or young person, contact the Children's Services Contact Team:

Telephone: 020 7527 7400

(available 24 hours per day)

Families First supports families with school-aged children up to 19 years old. Trained family workers can provide support with housing, debt management, and help to get back to work. Contact:

Telephone: 020 7527 4343

E-mail: **familiesfirst@islington.gov.uk**

Targeted Youth Support (TYS)

provide youth outreach sessions, as well as one-to-one work with young people and their families, as well as offering drug and alcohol support, counselling and mentoring. Contact:

Telephone: 020 7527 2600

E-mail: **tys@islington.gov.uk**

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

Website: **www.kooth.com**

Victim support. The Victim Assessment and Referral Service (VARS) offers initial support and information to anyone affected by crime.

Freephone: 0808 168 9291.

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

Glossary of terms

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.

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Please contact 020 7527 2000.**

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Published December 2019