

Safeguarding Bulletin - Personal safety

Vapes

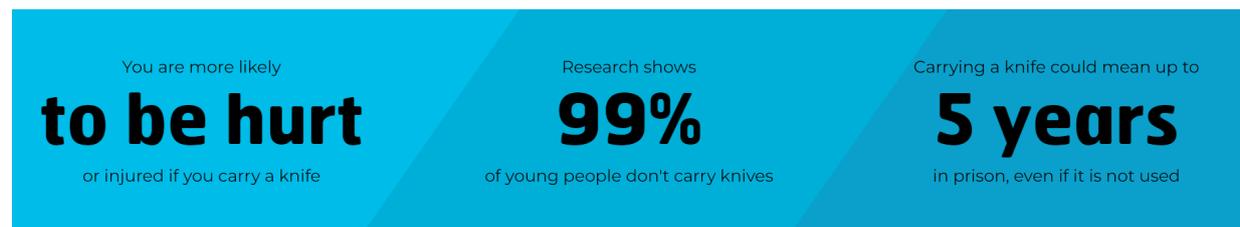
Please read this recent article from the BBC regarding fake vapes that have been found to contain high levels of nickel and chromium.

It is illegal to purchase vapes/e-cigarettes/e-liquids in the UK under the age of 18. It is also illegal for an adult to purchase for someone under the age of 18.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-65614078>

High levels of lead exposure in children can affect the central nervous system and brain development, according to the World Health Organisation

Knife crime across the UK



What is knife crime?

Knife crime is any crime involving a knife or sharp object. This includes: carrying a knife, owning a banned knife, trying to buy a knife if you are under 18, and/or threatening, injuring or fatally wounding someone with a knife.

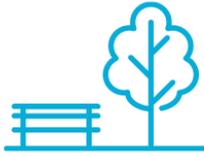
An offensive weapon is defined as any item that has been made or adapted for the intention to cause hurt or harm to another person, under the **Offences Weapon Act 2019**. It is also important to note that pepper spray is illegal to possess in the UK, and is classed as a firearm under **Section 5 (1)b of the Firearms Act 1968**.

Self-defence or self-protection are **not** valid reasons for carrying a knife or offensive weapon, and this choice could have serious consequences for that person, including serious or fatal injury to themselves or others, and a criminal record.

Knife crime laws

Listed below are the knife crime laws for the UK.

Joint Enterprise - If you know someone is carrying a knife and are part of an incident, you can also be charged with a crime.



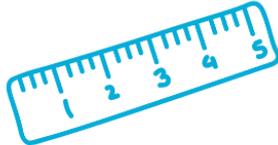
It is against the law to carry a knife in public place.

Unless the blade is less than 3 inches long and is a manual folding blade. Doing so can carry a prison sentence of up to 4 years even if it is not used in England & Wales, and 5 years in Scotland. It is also against the law to carry a knife on behalf of someone else



A person must be 18 or over to purchase a knife.

This includes cutlery and kitchen knives. In Scotland, people between the ages of 16 and 18 can legally purchase cutlery and kitchen knives.



If the blade is less than 3 inches in length and is a manual folding blade,

A person over the age of 16 can purchase this knife.



It is illegal to bring into the country, sell, possess, hire or give someone a banned knife.

Banned knives include: butterfly knives, disguised knives, flick knives, and zombie knives. A full list of banned knives in the UK can be found on the GOV website.

| MYTH | OR | FACTS |
|---|----|---|
| Carrying a knife provides a person with protection | | It has been proven that if you carry a knife, you are more likely to be hurt or threatened by someone else. People are often wounded by their own knife they were carrying, putting them at greater risk. |
| Most young people carry knives | | Actually, 99% of young people DO NOT carry knives. Sometimes it may feel like more people carry knives because of stories they've heard, or what they have seen online, on social media or in the news. |
| If it is illegal to carry a knife, then other sharp objects can be carried for protection | | Any sharp object that is being carried with the intention of using it in a threatening way could be classed as an offensive weapon. |
| There are safe places on the body to stab someone | | Any stab wound could be fatal for a number of reasons. For example, major arteries run across the whole body. If a major artery is severed, that person will bleed very quickly and it could be fatal within 5 minutes. |

When looking for warning signs that a young person may be carrying a knife, asking yourself the following questions can help:

- Has their attitude to school or education changed?
- Do they have new friends you've not met before?
- Are they protective and / or secretive with their bag and / or clothing?
- Have they been overly defensive when you've questioned them about their possessions?
- Do they send and receive more messages than they did before?
- Do they ever get up and leave the house abruptly?
- Are they out of the house more, particularly in the evenings and at night?
- Have they demonstrated a positive attitude towards those that carry knives, for example talking about self-defence?
- Have you noticed anything missing from your house that could be used as a weapon, like a kitchen knife or screwdriver?

There are many reasons why young people decide to carry a knife or weapon. These can include (but are by no means exhaustive):

- 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.
- To earn respect.
- Involvement in other criminal activities.

How to talk to young people about reporting crime

For young people, reporting crime can be a difficult decision. One way you can assist is to help the young person to detach themselves from the information – it's not about them but about the information they have.

When someone reports something to keep others safe, whether to a trusted adult, the police or Fearless.org, they are being an **active bystander**.

It is important to change the narrative of crime reporting when talking to young people. They are not being a snitch; they are helping make their community, friends and family safe. They are creating a safer place for everyone to live.

- STEP 1** Find a time to chat comfortably
- STEP 2** They might be reluctant to talk to you, so why not use recent news as a conversation starter
- STEP 3** Discuss each other's views on knives, remember you're there
- STEP 4** Understand that they might feel like they don't have any other choices, support them
- STEP 5** Explain that knives do not give protection. Carrying one could mean prison, serious consequences or getting hurt themselves.

- STEP 6** Say the bravest thing to do is to walk away from a dangerous situation.
- STEP 7** Explore excuses with them that they can use
- STEP 8** For example they might say they have to pick up younger sibling or you could arrange to call them if they send you
- STEP 9** Reassure them that most people their age and older do not carry knives.
- STEP 10** Explain they can always report their concerns about anyone carrying a knife anonymously through Fearless, an organisation designed to help young people.

Snitching Vs Reporting

The word snitching carries a lot of negativity. No young person wants to be called a snitch or to be known as a snitch. It is important that we help young people to see that there is a difference between snitching and reporting a crime.

Young people would rather get into trouble themselves than be seen as a snitch.

- *Allnock & Atkinson, 2019*

The information below highlights how reporting crime has positive outcomes and is done for positive reasons.

You can use this information to speak to young people to help them identify the differences between snitching and reporting:

| Snitching | Reporting |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To get someone else in trouble• To stop yourself getting in trouble• To gain something from it• To hurt or upset someone you don't like | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To keep yourself safe• To keep someone else/others safe• The problem might be urgent/important• You may need an adult's help• Speaking out because you know something is wrong |

We understand that there are many reasons why young people may not want to report a crime. Being labelled a snitch is one of these reasons, however there are many more. So even after having these conversations with your young person they may still be worried about reporting a crime. This is where Fearless can help, providing young people with a safe space to report crime. They will not need to speak to the police, they will not need to go to court and no one will know they have made a report.

Give information anonymously

Fearless - who we are

Fearless is the dedicated youth service of the independent charity Crimestoppers. We provide you with the opportunity to give information about crime **100% anonymously**.

You can give information to us using our [online form](#) or by calling Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.

We cannot track your IP address or your phone number. We have no way of knowing who has contacted us.

After receiving your completed form or your call, we create a report, ensuring it doesn't contain any info that could identify you, and generate a report which is then sent on to the relevant authority with the legal responsibility to review the information that has been passed to them.

We are not the police. We are a charity. You will not be contacted by the police after passing information on to Fearless as the police have no way of knowing who the information has come from.

<https://crimestoppers-uk.org/fearless>

<https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/behaviour/challenging-behaviour/child-knife-crime/>

Personal safety

Here are some tips to follow if you are out and about.

- Stay alert – awareness is your best defence.
- Leave venues with friends wherever possible.
- Try to stay in well-lit areas.
- Be confident – even if you don't feel it.
- Travel as if you know where you are going.
- Take the most direct route and try to stay within areas where other people are around.
- Trust your instincts – if you think something is wrong then act on it.
- Have your keys available when you reach your home or car.
- Keep money for taxis – the expense is worth it.
- Carry a personal alarm and use it when necessary.

If you are a victim:

- Get help immediately.
- In an emergency dial 999 or 112.
- Make as much noise as you can to alert people.
- As soon as you can, go somewhere you know is safe.
- If you have been attacked, don't shower or change your clothes as it may destroy evidence.
- If you have the confidence, tell the police why you think you were attacked.
- If you have had your keys taken, ensure you change the locks.
- Don't drink alcohol – you need to give a clear account of what happened.
- You can report to the police using the [online reporting facility on this website](#). (You can report anonymously, although we'd prefer to be able to speak to you)
- If you want to pass information about offenders, you can contact [Crimestoppers](#) or call on 0800 555111.

If you are a witness:

- Call 999 or 112
- Let the police know what you've seen. Don't assume others will come forward. Many crucial witnesses walk away thinking someone else will report it.
- Stay alert and safe.
- Don't physically intervene – you could get hurt yourself.
- If it is safe to do so, take a photograph or video on your mobile phone. Remember, however, that the police are likely to need your phone as evidence.

- Record details of times, number plates, descriptions and so on. If you don't have a pen with you, leave a voicemail message on your mobile phone or write a draft text message. As soon as you can find a pen and paper, write down the information in as much detail as possible.
- You can report to the police using the [online reporting facility](#) on this website. (You can report anonymously, although we'd prefer to be able to speak to you)
- If you want to pass information about offenders, you can contact [Crimestoppers](#) or call on [0800 555111](tel:0800555111).

Reporting a hate crime

True Vision has been developed so that you can report hate crimes online - you do not have to visit a police station to report.

The police take hate crime very seriously and will record and investigate this offence even if you do not want to give your details. However, you must note that the investigation and ability to prosecute the offender(s) is severely limited if the police cannot contact you. Most importantly we can not get you the support you may need.

You may also specify how you want to be contacted and say if contacting you would cause you any difficulties. The police will not pass on your details without your consent and we would urge you to give your details when you report as this will help you get any support you deserve and improve our chances of identifying the offender.

https://www.report-it.org.uk/your_police_force

Personal safety: how to stay safe advice from the Police

<https://www.met.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention/personal-safety-how-to-stay-safe/>

Useful places to go for information for your son/daughter:

Samaritans: 116 123 www.samaritans.org

Childline 0800 1111

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

<https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/>

<https://youngminds.org.uk/>

<https://www.kooth.com/>

