

Reporting Crime

# Snitching and the Bystander Approach



**fearless**  
Part of Crimestoppers

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# Introduction

## What is Fearless?

Fearless.org is the dedicated youth service from the independent charity Crimestoppers.

Developed through consultation with young people, Fearless aims to break down any barriers that might prevent young people from reporting crime. Whether this is a fear of the process or a distrust of the Police, we want to empower young people to speak out.

We do this by promoting our unique service that gives anyone the opportunity to speak up to stop crime, 100% anonymously.

## How it works?

Young people can pass information about crime to Fearless 100% anonymously via an online form on the Fearless.org website or by calling our 0800 555 111 phone line, 24/7, 365 days a year.

After receiving the call or a completed anonymous online form, we create a report that brings together all the information given to us. Our specially trained contact centre staff make sure it doesn't contain any information that could identify who or where the information came from, protecting their anonymity.

The sanitised report is then sent to the relevant authority with the legal responsibility to investigate crimes, make arrests and charge people in order to bring them to justice. This could be a local police force or an agency such as the UK Border Agency or HM Revenue & Customs.

## Anonymity promise

Anonymous means that your identity is completely unknown.

Our promise of anonymity is vital to us as it is what makes our charity unique.

We guarantee to young people, indeed everyone, that:

- They can give us information about crime without giving their name or any personal details.
- They will not be asked for their gender or age.
- We will not record any personal details they might mention.
- We physically cannot trace their phone number, email or IP address as our system is designed to protect their identity.

For more information, visit [www.fearless.org](http://www.fearless.org)



FearlessORG



FearlessAgainstCrime



Fearlessuk



FearlessORG

## Empowering young people to speak up about crime.

# About this resource

This resource has been produced for professionals working with young people throughout the UK.

It provides information about Fearless.org, discusses the barriers to reporting crime including myths around snitching and also information on the Bystander Approach and how you can talk to young people about being an active bystander.

You can use this resource to help you to discuss young people's perceptions, stimulate debate and encourage conversation around crime and crime reporting.

Fearless is committed to empowering young people to make informed choices about crime that affects them and their communities.

We hope that by using this resource with the young people you work with they will;

- Have a greater understanding of specific crimes that affect them and their peers
- Have a greater awareness of safe routes to report crime and criminal behaviour
- Take positive action to make their communities safer for everyone

For more information contact the fearless team [fearless@crimestoppers-uk.org](mailto:fearless@crimestoppers-uk.org)

## With thanks to:

### Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit (VRU)



This resource was funded and supported by Kent and Medway VRU.

### Graham Goulden, Cultivating Minds UK

for his support and insight on the Bystander Approach.

<https://grahamgoulden.com>

# Breaking down the barriers to reporting crime

## Snitching

**To snitch on a person means to tell someone in authority that the person has done something bad or wrong.**

Collins English Dictionary

### Reasons young people don't report

Less than one fifth of children and young people who experience violent crime actually go on to report this to the police (ONS, 2014).<sup>1</sup>

There are a number of reasons why young people may decide not to report a crime, some of these reasons include;

- Fear of repercussions
- Joint enterprise: concerns around if they share too much information they may be associated with the crime/incident
- Distrust of police/authority figures, or they don't have a safe place/person to report this information to
- Not sure if what they have seen constitutes a crime
- They experience higher rates of crime so become desensitised to it

**The fear of being labelled a 'snitch' is one of the main reasons we hear young people say they would not report a crime, often stating 'snitches get stitches'.**

One report found that young people 'would rather get into trouble themselves than be seen as a snitch' (Allnock & Atkinson 2019, p.15).<sup>2</sup>



1. [https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20160109023849/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_365203.pdf](https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20160109023849/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_365203.pdf)

2. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0145213418304800>

## Snitching vs reporting

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 about passing on information they may have about a crime. 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**.

The word snitching carries a lot of negativity. No young person wants to be called a snitch or to be known as a snitch. The table below can be used to help young people identify the differences between snitching and reporting. It highlights how reporting crime has positive outcomes and is done for positive reasons.

### Snitching

- 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

### Reporting

- 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

It is also vital that as professionals working with young people that we are aware that some young people, especially those who are being exploited, may feel that the decision to report is out of their control.

They may be living in fear of the person who is exploiting them and that fear is very real for the young person. As professionals, we need to accept and acknowledge their experiences. They may not feel able to make the same decisions and choices as their peers.

This is another great opportunity to speak to the young person about Fearless.org and the opportunity to report what they know about crime 100% anonymously. They will not have to give any details about themselves, they will not have to speak to the police and they will not have to go to court.

## Bystander Approach

In our lives, we sometimes witness attitudes and/or behaviours that we don't like or agree with. It may be that they clash with our personal values, our organisational values or both.

The default can often be to "ignore" – walk away and remain silent even when it is a friend, a work colleague or stranger that is involved or impacted. We might not see it as our business or our role to intervene.

**Do we ever consider the consequences of our inaction? What does our silence and inaction say to those involved or impacted?**

We can all be bystanders. Every day events happen around us.

At some point, we will notice someone at risk, either because of the behaviour of others (such as sexual harassment or bullying) or through their own behaviour (such as carrying a knife). When this happens, we will decide to do or say something, or to simply let it go.

**The Bystander Approach encourages us to take action and to prevent harm.**

When we intervene, we show to others that the behaviour is unacceptable and that we want to see a change. If such messages are constantly reinforced within our community, we can shift

the boundaries of what is considered acceptable and we can work together to reduce crime and to make our community safer. When we do something to prevent harm it sends a signal to others about our beliefs, our values and about who we are.

Becoming an active bystander is not easy. Young people might feel embarrassed to say something in public, they might fear repercussions or simply think that someone else will step in, and these feelings are common. In fact, if more people are around, it is less likely that someone will intervene.

It is important to think about the reasons, like those listed in the previous section, that explain why young people might not want to become involved.

**However, it is also important that young people feel empowered and prepared, so that if they do see a crime occurring, they know that they can do something safely, to make a positive difference.**

This information aims to help you speak to young people about being an active bystander. We hope that the Bystander Approach will be adopted by adults and children, and that we will see it being talked about in schools, colleges and places where people work.



## There are five main ways to be an active bystander

### 1. Take Direct action

We can directly intervene in a situation, but we should only do so if it is safe and we don't put ourselves at risk.

### 2. Distract

We can interrupt, start a conversation with the perpetrator to allow their potential target to move away or have friends intervene. Or come up with an idea to get the victim out of the situation. Distraction will help reduce the risk of harm happening and give us time to talk.

### 3. Delegate

There may be someone better who can intervene, such as someone trusted by the person carrying a knife. Delegation means asking someone else to talk to them and to help them see that what they're doing is wrong. This could include telling a friend, a teacher or the police if someone in authority is needed to step in. By telling Fearless about a crime or a concern, the young person can delegate the responsibility to intervene.

### 4. Delay

We might be able to slow things down before they go past the point of no return. Delaying can take the emotions out of how someone responds.

### 5. Document

Make a note or record what's happened and who was involved. Notes can help you see how many times something was happening and can help you show others about why you are concerned.

**For all of the above ways to act, please remember that if someone is in immediate danger/risk of harm and it is safe for you to do so then call 999.**

It may be difficult for anyone to feel confident to be a bystander and to act. Something to discuss with young people, to help build their confidence, is engaging their friends. It may be helpful to know that there is a network or group of friends who see things in the same way and can offer support.

They may want to talk to their friends about;

- what is right and wrong
- what they would do if they saw something happening.

Knowing that there are others who can support them may help provide the confidence to act or speak out. However, this always needs to be done with the knowledge and acceptance that for some young people, engaging their friends in this way wouldn't be possible for them.

**Being an active bystander shows to the world the person we are and how we want our community to be.**



# Are you fearless?

**It's easy to embed Fearless within your school, youth group or organisation.**

Our positive call to action can be easily slotted into existing health and wellbeing topics, PHSE lessons, assemblies and awareness days.

## **Fearless five top tips**

- 1. Ask IT to add Fearless.org to the list of secure websites that staff and young people can access and add our homepage as an icon to all computer desktops/tablets.**
- 2. Visit our website Fearless.org and request FREE posters to display in your school, youth club etc.**
- 3. Follow us on twitter @Fearlessorg and retweet our campaigns.**
- 4. Include information about our service within parent newsletters.**
- 5. Tell young people that our service is there for them.**

You can also use the Fearless Playing Cards as a prompt for having conversations with young people around Snitching and the Bystander Approach which can be downloaded from our website [www.fearless.org/en/professionals/resources/downloads](http://www.fearless.org/en/professionals/resources/downloads).

We have a team of Fearless Outreach Workers across the country, delivering workshops to young people and professionals. To find out if there is a Fearless Worker in your area, please email [fearless@crimestoppers-uk.org](mailto:fearless@crimestoppers-uk.org).

### **Young people told us:**

**“I'm not a grass but if I thought my mate was involved in something serious or someone was going to get hurt... I'd tell Fearless. It's a good idea.”**

### **Professionals told us:**

**“Fearless is a really valuable addition to our young people's life toolkit.”**

## For more information about Bystander Approach

If you would like to know more about Bystander Interventions, the links below will take you to different websites. These provide examples of where the bystander approach has been used, and come from different countries and different situations. They are being shared to allow the reader to learn more about how the approach can be adapted and used within any specific school, community or service.

### Scotland

#### No Knives, Better Lives

<https://noknivesbetterlives.com/practitioners/resources>

### Ireland

#### Irish Network Against Racism

<https://inar.ie/witnessing-racism-what-to-do-as-a-bystander>

### America

#### National Sexual Violence Resource Centre

<https://www.nsvrc.org/bystander-intervention-resources>

#### New York Department of Health

<https://www.health.ny.gov/publications/2040>

### Australia

#### Living Well website

<https://learn.livingwell.org.au/mod/page/view.php?id=297>

#### Notre Dame University

<https://www.notredame.edu.au/community/student-wellbeing-and-support/active-bystander>



## For further information and support

### We are with you

[www.wearewithyou.org.uk](http://www.wearewithyou.org.uk)

With You is a charity providing free, confidential support to people experiencing issues with drugs, alcohol or mental health.

### Missing People: Safecall Service

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

Are you a professional who thinks a child or young person that you are working with is being made to sell or transport drugs, or is at risk of being exploited?

Are you working with a parent or carer of a child or young person that has found themselves caught up in this form of exploitation?

Missing people's dedicated, specialist Safecall service can help.

### Barnardos

[www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

Barnardos help hundreds of thousands of children, young people, parents and carers via their 800+ services across the UK.

### NSPCC

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

Whether you want to report child abuse and neglect, or are worried about a child and aren't sure what to do, NSPCC have advice to help.

### CEOP

[www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

If you're worried about online abuse or the way someone has been communicating online, let CEOP know.

### Knife Free

[www.knifefree.co.uk](http://www.knifefree.co.uk)

Join the millions of young people living knife free. Find other ways you can spend your time, see real life stories, know the risks, get the help and support you need, or find out how to help a person you are worried about.

### St Giles Trust

[www.stgilestrust.org.uk](http://www.stgilestrust.org.uk)

Help people held back by poverty, exploited, abused, dealing with addiction or mental health problems, caught up in crime or a combination of these issues and others. They show people there is a way to build a better future – for themselves and those they care about – and help them create this through support, advice and training.

### Catch 22

[www.catch22.org.uk](http://www.catch22.org.uk)

Design and deliver services that build resilience and aspiration in people of all ages and within communities across the UK.

# Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes.



[www.fearless.org](http://www.fearless.org)

Crimestoppers Trust is a charity

Registered charity

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