



**fearless**  
Part of Crimestoppers  
Fearless.org 0800 555 111

# KNIFE CRIME

# 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 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.



**Empowering young people to speak up about crime.**



For more information, visit **[www.fearless.org](http://www.fearless.org)**  
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 knife crime such as the law, including joint enterprise and stop & search. It also includes clarification on some misconceptions young people may have about knife crime. 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:**

1

Have a greater understanding of specific crimes that affect them and their peers

2

Have a greater awareness of safe routes to report crime and criminal behaviour

3

Take positive action to make their communities safer for everyone

**Note:** Using this resource for debate and conversation may lead to disclosures from young people. It is important that any disclosures made to you are managed through your local safeguarding arrangements, and that you follow your settings safeguarding policy. Fearless.org are unable to take information from victims of crime, but at the back of this booklet you will find other agencies that may be able to provide advice, support and guidance.

With thanks to:



This resource was funded and supported by Kent and Medway VRU and Kent Police and Crime Commissioner.

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





# Knife crime - laws

Listed below are the knife crime laws for the UK. Please note there are some variations in the law between England, Wales & Scotland.

- It is against the law to carry a knife in a public place, unless the blade is less than 3 inches long, is a manual folding knife and there is a lawful and valid reason for having it. Carrying a knife can lead to a prison sentence of up to 4 years even if it is not used in England & Wales, and 5 years in Scotland.
- It is against the law to carry a knife on behalf of someone else
- Using any knife in a threatening way, is a criminal offence.
- 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.
- In the UK, 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.

## Offensive Weapons

An offensive weapon is defined as any item that has been made, adapted or intended to hurt or cause harm to another person, under the Offences Weapon Act 2019. 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.

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of people purchasing safety keychains online, labelled as self-defence products. These safety keychains vary but often come with a range of different keyrings with sharp edges or may contain either toxic or non-toxic sprays. As outlined above, items that have been made or adapted to cause injury are against the law. Therefore, possession of one of these safety keychains may be illegal. 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.

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# Why do young people carry knives?

The reasons why young people carry knives and the motivations for doing so vary from young person to young person; it is important as professionals we acknowledge these differences. Each young person will require a tailored response and approach from trusted adults and professionals.

Evidence from Brennan, 2017 shows there are three main reasons why young people carry knives:

- Self-protection and fear (defensive weapon carrying)

A young person might choose to carry a weapon as a means to protect themselves, especially if they have previously been a victim of crime or are fearful they may be victimised.

- Self-presentation

A young person may want others to see them in a certain way; to conjure notions of respect and status or simply to fit in with others in their group.

- Utility (offensive weapon carrying)

A young person might carry a weapon to facilitate other crimes such as theft, robbery and injury.

Brennan (2018) also found that low trust in the police may lead someone to use a weapon to seek revenge instead of relying on police procedures.

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## 'Myth busting'

### Myth

If it is illegal to carry a knife, then other sharp objects can be carried for protection

### Fact

Any object that is being carried with the intention of using it in a threatening way could be classed as an offensive weapon.

### Myth

Carrying a knife provides a person with protection

### Fact

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.

### Myth

There are safe places on the body to stab someone

### Fact

Any stab wound could be fatal for a number of reasons:

- Major arteries run across the whole body. If a major artery is severed, a person could bleed to death in 5 minutes
- A stab wound could cause an infection such as sepsis, which can become fatal very quickly.
- Someone may have an underlying health condition that can't be seen which could impact the way they react to shock, stress or injury.
- Similarly, someone may take medication that can react with a stab wound.

### Myth

Most young people carry knives

### Fact

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. Most young people aged between 10 – 29 do not carry knives, so this hopefully provides some reassurance that this doesn't happen as much as it may seem.

Essentially, it's important to question is it worth the risk? Whilst there will have been many instances where people have survived a stab wound, they may well have suffered life changing injuries.

# Joint enterprise and stop & search

## Joint Enterprise

Joint enterprise is a section of the law which allows two or more people to be convicted of the same crime, potentially receiving the same sentence, even if they had differing levels of involvement.

The joint enterprise law is for circumstances where there is evidence to prove a group of people were involved in a crime, but where it is difficult to determine who is the main perpetrator. For example, if a murder has taken place and there is evidence that 5 people were involved, but it is difficult to determine which of those 5 dealt the fatal blow, they could all be convicted of murder under joint enterprise.

### **Someone being convicted of joint enterprise could have played a number of roles, such as:**

- Providing the weapon
- Arranging the meeting between the victim and perpetrator
- Assisting the perpetrator with fleeing the scene

Essentially, if that person has 'intentionally assisted and encouraged another to commit an offence', they could be held accountable and both individuals could be convicted, even if it is not known who committed the crime and who was the 'accessory'.

## Stop & Search

Police have the power to stop and search any person if they have 'reasonable grounds' to suspect that person may be carrying something on them that is against the law or could cause harm to others. This could include illegal drugs, a knife or weapon, stolen items or an item that could be used to commit a crime.

### **Examples of 'reasonable grounds' could include:**

- A member of the public has told a police officer that someone is carrying something they shouldn't be
- Somebody matches the description of someone they are looking for

When an officer conducts a stop & search there are a number of steps they must take during the process.

### **They must:**

- Let the person they are searching know their name and police station or show them their warrant ID card
- Explain to the person the reason why they are being stopped and searched and the law in which this falls under
- Give the person a written record of the stop & search, or notify them of where they can collect this record later

A stop & search is not voluntary. If a person refuses a stop & search, then police can use reasonable force to conduct a search, or the person may be taken to a police station for the search to be conducted.



# 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 X @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, which can be downloaded from our website, as a prompt for having conversations with young people around knife crime

[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)



### Further information

Gov.uk

[www.gov.uk/buying-carrying-knives](http://www.gov.uk/buying-carrying-knives)

Ben Kinsella Trust [www.benkinsella.org.uk](http://www.benkinsella.org.uk)

No Knives Better Lives

[www.noknivesbetterlives.com](http://www.noknivesbetterlives.com)





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