

Dear Sir/Madam,

This week (Monday 11 - Sunday 17 March) marks the start of Op Sceptre, a knife crime awareness campaign.

Launched by the Metropolitan Police in 2015 in response to knife crime, Op Sceptre, a national campaign, aims to raise awareness, with the overall aim of reducing knife crime and the harm it causes to individuals, their families and the wider community.

Wiltshire continues to be a safe county to live and work in, with the number of knife crime incidents in Wiltshire falling by 18 per cent since September 2017, however as we see incidents of knife crime rising across the country, especially those involving young people, we know we cannot be complacent.

As a key part of our communities we are asking for your help in sharing the message that knife crime will not be tolerated in our county.

We know that most young people don't carry knives, it is not a normal thing to do, but research conducted across the county tells us some young people choose to carry knives for protection and because it makes them feel safer.

With your help, and building on the good work you are already doing, we need to educate young people to ensure that they understand the law and the consequences that carrying a knife can have.

Fearless is a website for young people created by Crimestoppers, as a way for young people to access information and to anonymously report incidents of crime. Please can we ask you to make your students aware of this website <https://www.fearless.org/en>

Please also find attached a leaflet on knife crime which can be shared with both pupils and parents.

Thank you in anticipation for your ongoing support in tackling knife crime.

Best wishes

Sonja Leith

Head of Crime Prevention – Wiltshire Police

# KNIFE CRIME

Everyone has the right to live a life free from fear and violence.

We all have a duty and responsibility to keep each other safe from violence, and expect that our friends, family and children won't be carrying weapons.

Any incident where a knife or weapon has been carried or used with the intention to harm is a concern to us and police will investigate.

**Knives are an everyday object but used for the wrong reasons they can be life threatening.**

Most young people and adults don't carry a knife or weapon; it is not a normal thing to do.

A small number of people do find themselves involved in knife crime but despite these numbers being small, the effects of knife crime can reach a lot of different people. Innocent bystanders can get caught in the middle of other people's disputes and suffer trauma, serious injuries or worse. A wound in the arm or the leg can still be life threatening.

If you carry a knife it doesn't just affect you it will affect your family and friends. It will affect your parents or children, especially if you were to go to prison, or worse killed.



**Carrying a knife is illegal in the UK and the consequences are tough. If you're found with a knife in your possession even if it is not yours, the Police and the courts will take firm action. Possession of a knife can carry a prison sentence of up to four years, even if it's not used.**

If you carry a knife you are more likely to be injured. You are safer not carrying a knife.

## THE LEGAL BIT...

- It is illegal to carry a knife, blade / sharp point or offensive weapon in a public place. You can be arrested for this.
- If someone is injured or killed by a knife in your presence, even if you are not the one using the weapon, you too could be prosecuted and sent to prison for murder in what is referred to as 'joint enterprise'.
- It's illegal for a shop to sell any kind of knife to someone under 18. This includes kitchen knives and even cutlery.



- It's illegal for shops to sell imitation guns or air weapons to anyone under 18-years-old, or to sell realistic imitation guns to anyone. It is also an offence to buy imitation guns.



- Some knives are illegal for anyone to buy:
  - Flick knives - also called 'switchblades' or 'automatic knives'
  - Butterfly knives
  - Disguised knives - in which the blade is hidden in something like a belt buckle or fake mobile phone.

These are all categorised as offensive weapons ("any article made or adapted for use to cause injury to a person, or intended by the person having it with him for such use") and are completely banned.

## AGE OF CRIMINAL RESPONSIBILITY...

In England and Wales, the age when you are criminally responsible for your actions is 10 years old. Children between 10 and 17 can be arrested and taken to court if they commit a crime.

Children under 10 who break the law are treated differently to adults or youths under 18 who commit a criminal offence. Children under 10 cannot be charged with committing a criminal offence. However, they can be given a:

- Local Child Curfew
- Child Safety Order.

Children under 10 who break the law regularly can sometimes be taken into care, or their parents could be held responsible.



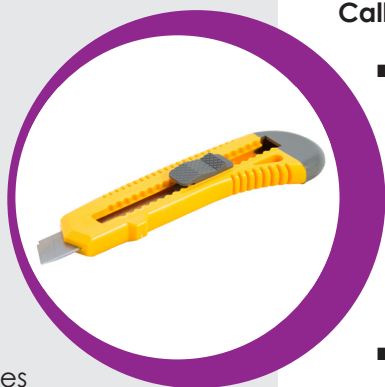
## WHAT ABOUT PARENTS...



Parents can sometimes be held responsible if their children get in trouble with the police. If children are repeatedly in trouble and parents don't take reasonable steps to control their behaviour the parents could be:

- asked to attend a parenting programme
- asked to sign a Parenting Contract
- given a Parenting Order by a court

This is to support parents in stopping their children from getting in trouble again. Usually they are voluntary, but sometimes it is made more formal by a court.



## DID YOU KNOW...

- Police can stop and search someone they think is carrying a knife or weapon.
- Police can come into schools and search for knives if they think the law is being broken.
- Head teachers have the power to search pupils for weapons in line with the Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT...



### Visit

- <https://www.wiltshire.police.uk> – search offensive weapons
- <https://www.knifefree.co.uk>
- <http://noknivesbetterlives.com>

### Call

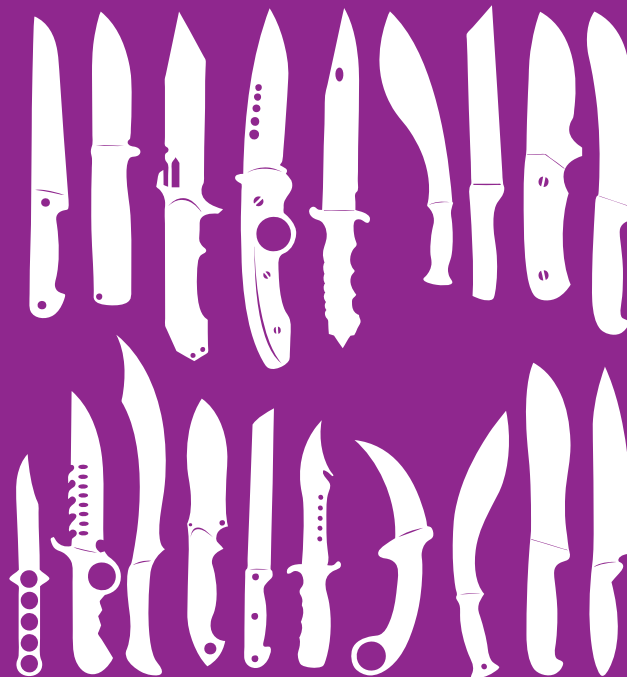
- Childline on 0800 1111
- Victim support 0808 16 89 111

### Report an incident or share information about knife crime

- Call Wiltshire Police on 101 or in an emergency 999
- Report crime anonymously and speak to someone in confidence.
  - Call Crimestoppers charity anonymously on 0800 555 111 or
  - if you are under the age of 18 report anonymously using <https://www.fearless.org/en/give-info>



# NO KNIFE SAFER LIFE



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