



Lesson plan for key stage 4

_#knifefree

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Context

This single lesson focuses on positive choices that young people could make and have made to be knife free. It will therefore enhance work on personal safety and risk management or lessons which have introduced topics related to gang crime. It aims to challenge misconceptions students may have about carrying a knife and so encourage more of them to be knife free. Neither this, nor the key stage 3 lesson, is designed to be taught in isolation, but should always form part of a planned, developmental PSHE education programme.

Learning objective

We are learning:

- to effectively assess and manage the risks of knife crime
- how young people can take steps to achieve their goals and live knife free

Intended learning outcomes

- ✓ I can challenge common myths and inaccuracies about carrying a knife and explain how it can impact a person's future
- ✓ I can explain how to make decisions, demonstrate resilience and manage risk
- ✓ I can explain how young people can make the choice to be knife free, understand how people can get support and can give advice to others about becoming knife free

Resources required

- Box or envelope for anonymous questions
- Resource 1: Baseline opinions
- Resource 2: Real life stories
- Resource 3: Changing the conversation

Lesson summary

Activity	Description	Timing
_1 Baseline assessment	Students complete an attitude continuum demonstrating their initial views about knife crime	10min
_2 Real life stories (video)	In two groups, students focus on a character from each video and reflect on their experiences	10min
_3 Decision making	Students discuss the pivotal decision each character made and the influences on this decision	15min
_4 Changing the conversation	Students work in pairs to challenge comments about knife crime	10min
_5 Endpoint assessment	Students revisit the attitude statements and compare how their views have changed as a result of the lesson	10min
_6 Reflection and signposting	Encourage students to write anonymous questions or comments and signpost further sources of support	5min

Climate for learning

- Make sure you are familiar with the school's safeguarding policy.
- Consider any sensitivities and prior knowledge about specific pupils' circumstances. Prior notice that this issue will be covered may be advisable. Notice should be given to pastoral and other relevant staff.
- Local and national support groups or helplines should be signposted.
- Invite pupils to write down any questions they have anonymously at any time, and collect them in using an anonymous question box or envelope, which should be accessible both in and after every lesson. Establish or reinforce existing ground rules. Add or emphasise any ground rules that are especially relevant to this lesson, such as not using personal stories and not making assumptions.

Key words

Knife, crime, consequences

Beginning the lesson

Introduction

Revisit or negotiate ground rules and remind students of the importance of respecting each other's ideas and opinions. Draw attention to the anonymous question box and remind them that they can submit questions at any time during or after the lesson.

Share the learning objectives and outcomes with students. Explain that today they will be thinking about the risks and consequences of carrying a knife, and how some young people have chosen to live knife free after their experiences with knives.

Baseline assessment activity

10 min

Hand out Resource 1: Baseline opinions and ask students to complete the **top half of the page only**. This allows students to reflect on the attitude statements and indicate their opinion on a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. It is important that students complete this activity individually and without discussion, so that they are able to represent their real opinions and not be influenced by others. Collect the sheets in and keep until the end of the lesson, when students will revisit their views. Use the students' responses to help guide and focus discussion throughout the lesson.

Choose some of the statements to discuss as a group, taking feedback from those students who are willing to share their opinions. Wherever possible, it is powerful for students to hear their peers disagreeing with knife crime or highlighting the risks and consequences. It is also important to counter some misconceptions about knife crime during the discussion, for example:

- Many young people incorrectly believe that others are carrying knives, which increases their own fear and lowers their inhibitions towards knife-carrying. In actuality, 99% of 10-29 year olds do not carry a knife.
- Many young people believe there will be no criminal charge for carrying a knife; however, a person can get up to 4 years in prison for possession of a knife, even if it is never used.
- While many young people believe that carrying a knife brings them protection, in reality people who carry a weapon are more likely to be hospitalised with a violence-related injury, and in many cases their own weapon has been used against them.
- Many young people who carry a knife say that they would prefer not to.

Core activities

Real life stories

10 min

Hand out Resource 2: Real life stories and as a class watch the two #knifefree campaign videos:

[Ben's story](#)

[Aliya's story](#)

Divide the class into two separate groups, and assign each group a different person to focus on (either Ben or Aliya). As they watch the videos, students should complete the questions on resource 2.

Take feedback from students, and emphasise the key learning points:

- These young people are role models who have transformed their lives and made an incredibly difficult choice to keep themselves safe and improve their future prospects, for example allowing them to pursue their interests and talents, and avoiding further negative consequences such as a prison sentence. They are now able to move on with their lives and focus on achieving their ambitions, careers and hobbies
- They can now be proud, not only of living knife free, but of their accomplishments with their hobbies, such as dance and BMXing, and of having a more promising future as a result of their decisions
- Emphasise that each of these young people have demonstrated bravery, self-confidence, determination, resilience, will power and ambition in order to live knife free
- These young people probably had to face challenges such as avoiding specific friends / groups of people, had to seek out other support and speak to the police about their situation, they may have felt less safe when they first stopped carrying a knife, there may have been lots of peer pressure or internal pressure to return to their old lifestyle
- It is important to raise that while these people faced challenges in choosing to live knife free, the benefits far outweigh these. For anyone who is changing their habits or lifestyle it can be difficult, which is why it is important to have a strong support network and to ask for help when it is needed. Their hobbies, ambitions, personal traits, family and trusted friends will have been essential in helping them to change their lives for the better

Decision making

15 min

Remind students that in each case study, the young people involved have made the difficult decision to become knife free. Explain that whenever a person makes decisions, they are likely to be deciding between positive and negative influences on each side.

Ask students to work in groups of three or four to create a table of:

- Positive influences (those that helped the person decide to go knife free)
- Negative influences (those that may have been encouraging negative behaviours, such as knife carrying)

During feedback, students are likely to identify:

- Positive influences: their friends and family (e.g. Ben's girlfriend and Aliya's other friends), their hobbies, (e.g. BMX, dance), their goals for the future, realising their talent and potential, their own personal safety, self-esteem and confidence, support from other services and organisations, realising they could make a difference, recognising the consequences of another path
- Negative influences: their friends who were carrying knives, their previous experiences, misconceptions about knife carrying, fear

Challenge questions:

- Which was the most powerful influence on the characters' decision? Why do you think this?
- How can a person resist negative influences when making decisions that could be high risk?
- How can we use these experiences to improve our own decision making?

During feedback, key learning points to draw out include:

These challenge questions provide an opportunity to emphasise what influences decisions, such as peer influence, influence of family, personal core values, and assessment of the likely risk involved. Being clear on our own personal values and skills in accurate risk assessment will help all of us in crucial decision making moments. Emphasise to students the importance of resilience in making good decisions and maintaining healthy lifestyle choices. Sometimes in life we all have to make difficult decisions, and we should always prioritise our personal safety and that of others.

Changing the conversation

10 min

Emphasise that it is everyone's responsibility to help make knife crime unacceptable, and this requires us to change the conversation, and to actively challenge attitudes about carrying knives.

In pairs, give out Resource 3: Changing the conversation, which shows one person making a positive statement about knife carrying, and one person offering a neutral response. Ask students to consider what they would say to actively challenge these views if they were part of the conversation, by adding a counter argument in each bubble.

Develop thinking using the following questions to promote discussion:

- What is the impact of the neutral response?
- Why is it important to actively challenge attitudes about knives?
- Why might it sometimes be difficult to do this?
- What might make it easier to change the conversation, both in person and on social media?

Ending the lesson

Assessing (demonstrating) progress

10 min

Return Resource 1: Baseline opinions and ask them to complete the second opinion grid at the end of the lesson. Encourage them to consider whether any of their views have changed as a result of the lesson, or if there are any views they feel more strongly about now. Next, ask students to choose one of the statements and write a short paragraph to explain how and why their opinion has developed throughout the lesson.

Reflecting on today's learning and signposting support

5 min

While students are revisiting the baseline activity, ensure that you display places where young people can go to access further information and support, explaining how each can help them. This should include their local community (e.g. friends, family, youth groups), support available in school (their tutor, head of year or a school counsellor) and local / national organisations:

- Childline – 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk – to find support and advice for young people about a range of issues
- #knifefree – www.knifefree.co.uk – to find out more about the campaign and for more information on how to live knife free
- Fearless (crime stoppers) – www.fearless.org – for advice and a way to anonymously report crime
- Victim support – www.victimsupport.org.uk – for support for anyone who has been a victim of crime

Extension / Home learning activities

#knifefree campaign

Ask students to create an advertising campaign to promote the #knifefree movement.

Depending on time and students' motivation for the topic, this could include some or all of the following elements:

- A tagline or slogan
- A logo
- A poster or flyer to raise awareness
- An information leaflet

Advising others

Using the websites above (Childline, #knifefree, Fearless and Victim Support) ask students to research what help is available for people who want to stop carrying knives, to report knife crime or to remove themselves from a gang. Students should then write a persuasive blog post advising young people about how and why they can live knife free.

Campaign Resources

Campaign posters are available to download [here](#).