

# **KNIFE CRIME (OP SCEPTRE) PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITY GUIDE**



Image courtesy of Motiv8: Young people taking part in a graffiti workshop as part of their CHOICES programme funded through the Violence Reduction Unit

# Foreword

Thank you for taking the time to read this Knife Crime awareness guide for how you can get involved to reduce and tackle knife crime in your area.

Knife crime devastates lives, and has far-reaching impact for victims, families and communities. Worryingly knife crime has been rising for a decade across England and Wales, and we believe it requires everyone to focus their efforts together to reduce knife crime. We also believe that working together we truly can make a difference that will make our people and our communities safer. This is about tackling the here and now issues and also their root causes.

The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) in Hampshire and IOW has been driving a collaborative approach to reduce knife crime since we started in 2022, with the goal of broadening the impact of Op Sceptre and reach a wider audience. Our small project team has been organising activity and building good practice across our 2 counties with partners, moving what was a traditionally police-led approach into a wider response, involving more organisations.

We believe that if you have the right conversations in the right places with the right people you will have an impact.

In 2025 it was reported that knife crime across Hampshire and IOW has decreased by 19% over the past 2 years, which we know is one of the largest reductions in knife crime in the country.

The data supports our efforts, and crucially we have opened doors with partners who have welcomed the opportunity to get involved in tackling knife crime. We believe this allows us as an area a greater chance to build on this, and keep the work going.

First of all, huge thanks to the project team for your ideas and enthusiasm. Our starting approach was to strengthen the links between policing and local authority community safety departments, and then it grew to many other key partners, who have embraced the opportunities that a partnership approach offered. Thank you to you all!

From 2022 to now, each time we have coordinated Op Sceptre activities, we have seen the numbers of partnership interventions rise, and the instances of knife crime fall. The VRU has written this guide to bring you what we have done so far, and hopefully inspire you to continue and grow this work.

Thank you for everything you do to reduce knife crime.



**Debbie Ashthorpe**  
**VRU Manager**  
**Hampshire and Isle of Wight**

# About this Guide

Knife crime is one of our society's most serious problems. In England and Wales we know there has been an increase in offences related to knives and sharp instruments, including a rising number of homicides and serious assaults.

## 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 aged under 18
- Threatening, injuring or fatally wounding someone with a knife
- Robbery

For more information visit [Crimestoppers](#)

Young People remain the most likely to be impacted by these offences, teenagers remain the most likely age group to be murdered by a knife and quite rightly this is now a huge area of focus. Knife crime is hugely complex and cannot be addressed in isolation.

Legislation and strategy is moving towards recognising that a suitable solution to drive down knife crime is going to be a long term approach across government, across organisations and including everybody, in order to target the true causes of the problem. We welcome the current drive to reduce knife crime by half and believe this is the right thing to be focussing on.

Knife crime has devastating effects on individuals and communities. Victims often suffer severe physical injuries,

emotional trauma, and long-term psychological scars. Families and friends of victims experience profound grief and loss, while communities may feel a heightened sense of fear and insecurity. The ripple effects of knife crime extend beyond immediate victims, and also impact others including local businesses, communities, schools and social services.

Efforts to combat knife crime involve not only law enforcement, but also community engagement, education, and support services to address the root causes and provide pathways to safer, more resilient communities.

It is right we should stop people carrying knives and reduce opportunities. Nationally knife crime has been rising steadily over many years. In 2024 it rose by 4%, reaching a total of 50,973 knife crimes.

# Op Sceptre (Knife Crime Awareness Week)

Operation Sceptre (knife crime awareness week) is a national campaign in England and Wales that takes place twice a year. It is coordinated by the National Police Chiefs' Council and aims to raise awareness of knife crime by increasing police efforts to detect, reduce and prevent it. We know that no one can tackle knife crime in isolation, traditionally this problem has sat with policing.

Local Authority Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) managers for each area have a key role to play. Between Police and CSP they provide the structure to keep communities safer. If you have concerns about individuals in your area you should contact the police or CSP in your area. This guide should be used to consider your involvement in wider Op Sceptre activities.

We know that working together with partners brings the conversations to the right places and that everybody has a role to play. Partners in Hampshire and IOW have been working increasingly in partnership over recent years and this guide has been written to highlight some of the great ideas and good practice.

This guide will assist you in working together with others who are also striving to make a difference. Some of these activities will be standalone that you may wish to pick up, but we also know working together makes a difference

## **Who is this guide for?**

This guide is to highlight some of this work and best practice and feel it will be best for

- Local Authorities
- Schools and Education
- Voluntary and Community Sector
- Housing Providers
- Anyone who wants to know more, or feels they have a role to play in reducing knife crime.

We hope you find it useful.

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# Police led initiatives

Some initiatives will have to be police led because they are largely aimed towards enforcement. If you want to get involved we encourage you to reach out to your **local Bobby for more information**. Good practice is for each policing area to have a knife crime SPOC (Single Point of Contact) who will coordinate these activities.

**[Click here to read more on Hampshire Constabulary approach to Op Sceptre](#)**

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- **Knife Sweeps**

These are high profile open area searches for knives and offensive weapons in problem areas, such as parks, alleyways etc.

- **Under 18 test purchases and Challenge 25 test purchases**

These are operations to test if stores and other outlets in a locality are selling age-restricted bladed articles

- **Knife Amnesty Bins**

These aim to remove weapons from the street by providing bins where people can drop knives off. Frequently bins will be in police stations, however public bins are now available in some areas. It is important to empty them directly before a week of intensification and again afterwards so you know what you have recovered.

**[Click here for information on your local knife amnesty bin](#)**

- **Knife Arch**

These can be placed in locations where there is a throughput of knives liable to be used in crime. It is a walk-through metal detector and is generally placed in a public space but can also be used at premises. These are always used in partnership with policing.

- **Visits to habitual knife carriers**

Habitual knife carriers are those people that data identifies as a high risk of knife-related criminality. Local forces are likely to be aware of these people already and Op Sceptre is an opportunity to take those conversations further. Good practice in many areas will involve partnership visits to habitual knife carriers, in order to support their needs and divert them away from criminal behaviour. While these visits can happen anytime, Op Sceptre is an ideal focus time for these visits.

# Police involved community initiatives & Education

These are initiatives which partners and communities can set up themselves and involve the police

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Education settings are key partners in the conversation about knife. Partners who work consistently and collaboratively with policing are able to deliver a strong message. These are some initiatives that have landed well across Hampshire and Isle of Wight:

- **Police Education Partnership Team**

This team connects Local Bobbies and education partners across Hampshire and IOW, to support children and young people. They can support with advice on local priorities, problem solving and weeks of actions, such as Op Sceptre, school visits, engagements, toolkits and lessons.

To organise a session contact: [schoolyouthengagement@hampshire.police.uk](mailto:schoolyouthengagement@hampshire.police.uk) or look at [www.safe4me.co.uk](http://www.safe4me.co.uk)

- **Beat Surgeries**

These are meetings held in the community where police and partners can meet residents and users of a location to talk about any issues they wish to raise e.g universities, libraries, pubs, gyms etc.

**To organise a beat surgery to contact your Local Bobby**

- **PACT Meetings**

PACT means Police and Community Together. These are meetings that take place locally where residents and members of the community talk about things that matter to them in that community. People can bring concerns, ideas, and talk about them openly with police and other practitioners and then agree a plan of action.

In Hampshire and IOW we have trialled Youth PACT meetings in Schools and created a guide which you can **download here**. Op Sceptre would be an excellent opportunity to bring a focus to knife crime in these meetings.

**To organise a PACT meeting contact your Local Bobby**

Resources to work with children parents and carers can be found further down in the guide.

# Partnership Initiatives

These are initiatives that you can adopt yourself and run within your organisation or community

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- **Detached Youth Work**

Is a vital connection between the voluntary sector and young people, delivering informal and social education where young people meet. Detached youth work can build trusting and consistent relationships with young people in the spaces they choose to hang out. Becoming a trusted adult to young people through detached youth work can lead to important meaningful conversations.

**[Click here to hear more about Motiv8's detached youth work](#)** and how they used it as a partnership opportunity during Op Sceptre.

- **Youth Groups**

Can deliver sessions designed to provide valuable information, raise awareness, and promote healthy behaviours among young people. Experts or knowledgeable speakers often lead the discussions, offering insights, practical advice, and answering questions. Youth groups are ideally placed to create a safe and supportive environment where young people can gain knowledge, share experiences, and develop skills to navigate important issues in their lives.

- **Knife Crime Awareness Partnership Training**

Is the process of enhancing skills, knowledge, and competencies. Op Sceptre is an opportunity to upskill your workforce or stakeholders and provide them with information, tools and techniques to perform their roles more effectively.

In November 2024 Portsmouth Youth Justice Service offered some knife crime awareness training to partners. The training concentrated on increasing knowledge and awareness, laws and consequences and contributing factors. **[Click here to hear to hear about the training](#)** from Lisa Morgan, Service Lead for Portsmouth Youth Justice Service

- **Partnership Planning Meetings**

Setting up opportunities for partners to plan collaboratively across your area will ensure a structured and cohesive approach to plans. Involving a range of partners will create wider engagement across a variety of communities and allow those partners who are less confident around their impact to work with others who have experience and knowledge. **[Click here to hear more about how Portsmouth Youth Justice Service](#)** undertake partnership working.

# Engagement

People, Partners and Organisations you can engage with:

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Over the past two years, VRU has engaged successfully with partners in the weeks of action.

Partners have shown a keen interest in participating and have expressed a strong desire to engage with knife crime information and we have received positive feedback from these efforts.

These include:

- Schools, colleges and Universities
- Housing Associations
- Gyms

For information on how you can engage partners visit the resources section of this guide.

# Communications and Social Media

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Using social media, online platforms, newsletters and communications can support and publicise the work carried out by your organisation, and broaden it's impact.

Social media can help us:

- Build trust with audiences and the public
- Reach wider communities
- Share information and resources to support communities
- Educate and raise awareness

Key messages we have promoted:

- Up to date facts and data
- Ways to report knife crime
- Places to get support
- Education on legislation and laws

The VRU has created a knife crime awareness campaign #NeverChooseKnives that you may wish to use as part of your own comms or use to inspire new messages.

**[Click here to download the #NeverChooseKnives Campaign pack](#)**

# Resources

[Click here](#) or scan QR code to download resources poster for your setting



## SERIOUS VIOLENCE TOOLKIT

**The Serious Violence Toolkit** is a one-stop shop for serious violence and knife crime here you will find key information in one place to guide you as a practitioner when working with children, young people, families and communities.



## HONEST CONVERSATIONS GUIDE AND WEBINAR

We understand that talking about knife crime isn't always easy and you may not know where to start. If you are worried about talking to children and young people about knife crime, we have produced an **honest conversation guide** to help you think about how to prepare for that. We have also worked with the Ben Kinsella Trust to produce a webinar on '**Having Honest Conversations**'. Much like the crib sheet above it gives advice and information on how to plan and begin an honest conversation with young people about this tricky subject.

Webinar



Guide



## KNIFE CRIME GUIDE

Working with The Ben Kinsella Trust, the VRU has written a **Guide to Knife Harm** which will upskill you on facts, the law, where to get support and much more!



## SERIOUS VIOLENCE AND KNIFE CRIME PARTICIPATION PACK



**This Participation Pack** is an amazing tool to spark conversations and engage young people on this critical issue. Packed with activities, conversation starters, and essential info, this resource is perfect for anyone working with young people who wants to engage them on the topic

## SAMPLE PARTNERSHIP BRIEFINGS

In 2024 the VRU supported partnership engagement by creating a **activity guide** and contact sheet as well as holding a **partnership briefing**. You may wish to use these to inspire your own partner comms

Activity  
Guide



Breifing



## LETTERS TO PARENTS AND CARERS

Over recent years, the VRU has written a letter for all parents and carers via the **primary** and **secondary** schools in Hampshire and Isle of Wight, to highlight Op Sceptre activities and raise awareness of knife crime. We also worked with housing providers in our area, who also wrote to their residents.

These were well received and we know if we talk about knife crime we raise awareness and encourage parents and carers to talk to their children.

Primary



Secondary



Housing Providers



## THE BEN KINSELLA TRUST



The Ben Kinsella is a charity that educates young people on the dangers of knife crime and helps them to make positive choices to stay safe. They offer free resources for young people, parents and carers and teachers and practitioners.

## YOUR POLICE UK

YourPoliceUK is national policing's Instagram channel for young people. They put out a new post every day about issues which are important to young people and which help to keep them safe. The account is monitored from 9am to 9pm, and we try to answer all comments and DMs which come in – from questions to jokes, to calls for help when people are in trouble. They also have a **content library** for you to be able to download and use on your own social pages.



## FEARLESS



Fearless is the dedicated youth service of the independent charity Crimestoppers. Here you can give information about crime **100% anonymously**, either via this **online form** or by calling Crimestoppers on **0800 555 111**.

## COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP INFORMATION (CPI)

CPI is a way to give information that is not a crime/no one needs an immediate response, but you think the police should know about. It gives professionals a safe and direct way to share non-urgent information with police relating to children/adults at risk. **For guidance and further information click here**

