

TEEN KNIFE CRIME



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TEEN KNIFE CRIME

Knives are present in all our lives, we use them everyday. However, knives have long been used as weapons, as well as practical tools – from flint tools to flick knives.

In recent years knife crime has appeared to be on the increase in the UK. Many media reports have featured young people alongside alarming statistics. However, it is difficult to get a truly accurate picture of UK knife crime because of changes in the way that crimes have been recorded and classified.

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies has spent many years trying to understand the information available to gain a clearer understanding of young people's experiences.

IS KNIFE CRIME REALLY ON THE RISE?

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies

Annual crime figures have sparked much discussion in the media, but beneath the headlines there are many different stories and experiences - some more significant and serious than others.

Surveys between 1997 and 2007 found the use of knives in violent incidents remained between 5 and 8%ⁱ. It was hard to find evidence of any real change so we cannot be absolutely certain any occurred during that time.

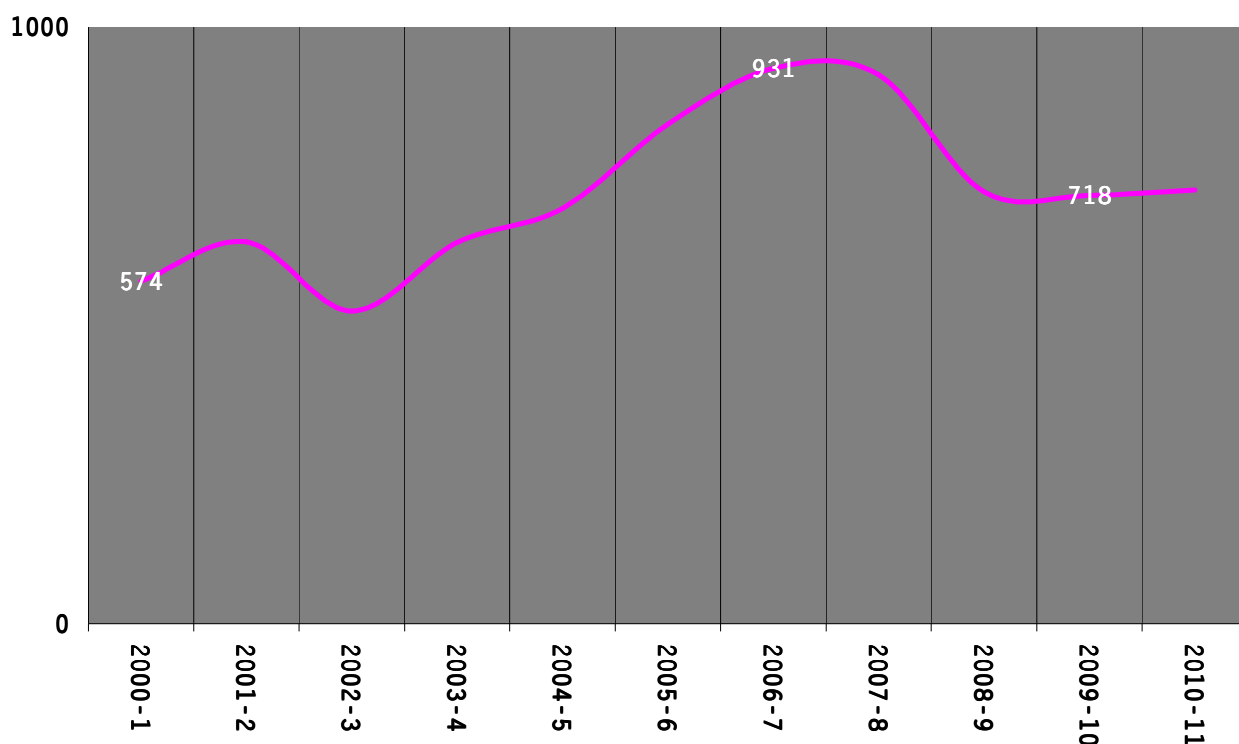
'Knife crime' may now include crimes that were not previously reported or measured, but the fact is, the more people are aware of a problem, the more they are likely to understand it and indeed to report it.

KNIFE CRIME VICTIMS

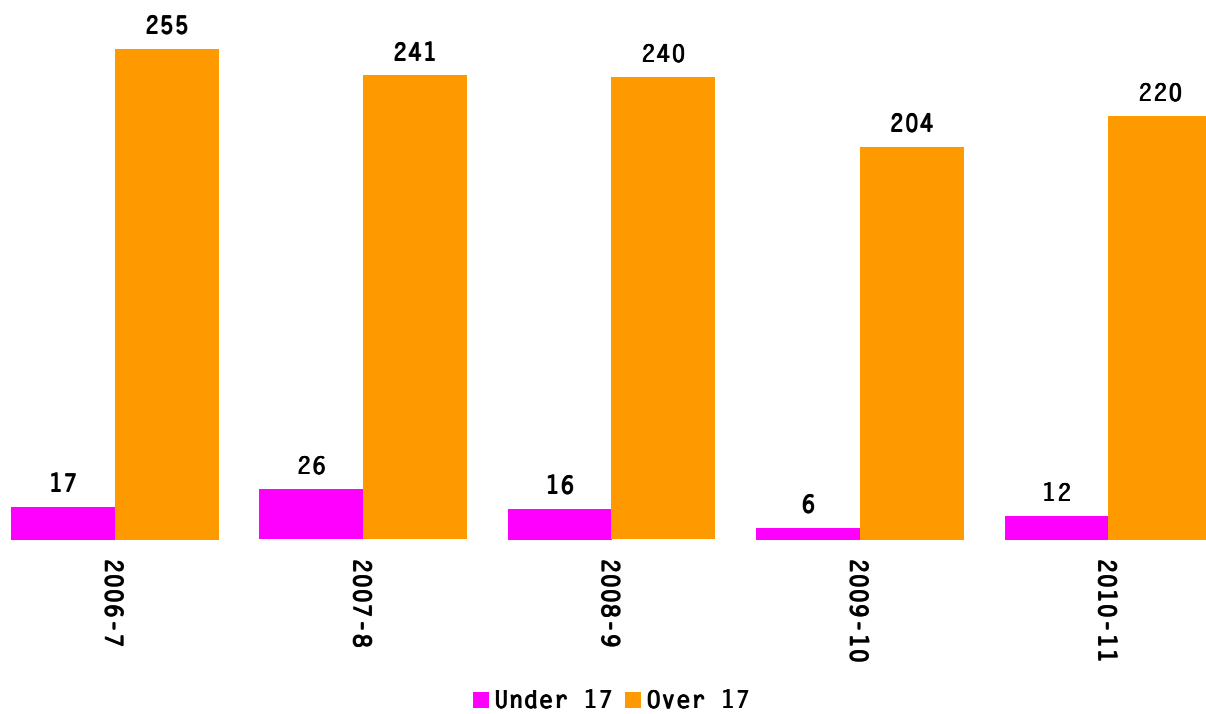
Violence between children is the third leading cause of death among young people in Europe. Approximately 40% of these deaths are due to knives and sharp instruments.ⁱⁱ

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies compared hospital statistics with official crime figures to uncover the level of knife-related violence in England. Recent figures reveal that the number of young people taken into hospital after being assaulted with a sharp object rose between 2000 and 2010, but reached a peak in 2006-7 at 931ⁱⁱⁱ.

Young people taken into hospital after being assaulted with a sharp object:



***People killed by a sharp instrument.
Home Office statistics, October 2011:***



Please note: These figures are subject to revision as cases are dealt with by the police and by the courts, or as further information become available.

WHY CARRY A KNIFE

There are many reasons why someone might decide to carry a knife. A common reason given is *for protection*, but others include – *out of fear, for revenge, because of peer pressure, to gain respect or be cool or to steal or intimidate*.

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies highlighted some factors which have been shown to influence some young people's decision to carry a weapon.

1. LOCATION

Knife-related violence has been shown to be more frequent in large urban areas.^{iv}

2. GENDER

People admitted to hospital because of assault are more likely to be young men living in deprived neighbourhoods.^v

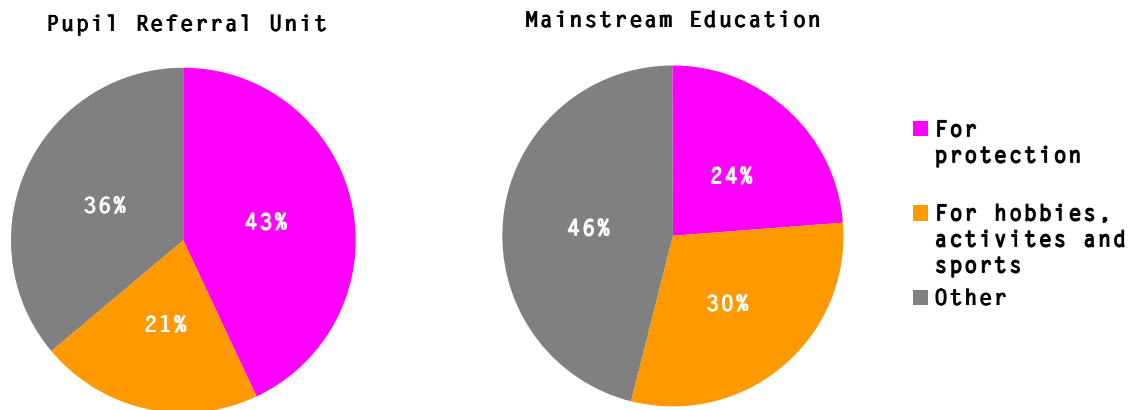
3. OPPORTUNITIES

Violence amongst young people appears to be the hardest to resolve in areas of poverty and discrimination. A lack of opportunities sometimes leads to individuals choosing to make money illegally, when weapons are commonly used for self defence.^{vi}

4. DIFFICULTIES AT SCHOOL

Young people experiencing educational problems appear to see themselves as particularly vulnerable to knife-related incidents.^{vii}

Reasons for carrying a knife :



5. HOME

Research has indicated that children who suffer abuse, or grow up in a hostile atmosphere, might be more at risk of taking part in violence.^{viii}

TACKLING KNIFE CRIME

It is an offence for anyone to have with them in a public place any article that has a blade or is sharply pointed. The only exception is a folding pocket knife with a cutting edge of three inches or less. The police are issuing fewer cautions, increasingly taking a tougher approach instead.

How successful have government anti-knife strategies been in the UK?
Centre for Crime and Justice Studies

It is difficult to find out whether young people change their behaviour after contact with the police and courts. A review of many studies revealed no evidence that tougher sentencing or untargeted crackdowns led to reduction in gun crime.^{ix} Indeed, young people caught by police for an offence who said they had carried a knife or a gun were more likely to say they then went on to take part in further offending behaviour, than those who had not carried a weapon.^x

The *Tackling Knives Action Programme*, which began in 2008 and expanded from 10 to 16 police force areas until its end in 2010, aimed to reduce violence among young people using a range of enforcement, education and prevention initiatives. There is not enough evidence to show that the programme reduced levels of violent incidents, despite the investment in police action and education projects; the trends were similar in areas where the Programme did not take place^{xi}.

Comprehensive community programmes are being introduced which, in addition to police action, treat young people as individuals and offer them incentives to change their behaviour. In the United States programmes that have offered job skills training and help with substance abuse seem to have had some positive impact on gun violence, at least temporarily. However they are not yet proven remedies.^{xii}

The most encouraging evidence is that prevention is better than cure. For example, in some programmes nurses are visiting families to help resolve problems in early childhood; they seem to be having a long term positive impact in reducing violent behaviour. Therapeutic foster care and nurse counselling have also been shown to be promising

programmes.^{xiii} These are examples of a 'public health' approach to reducing problems of violence.^{xiv}

TEENS INSPIRING CHANGE

Perhaps most encouragingly, young people have increasingly started their own campaigns and projects to tackle knife crime in their local areas. Here young campaigners share their experiences that led them to choose to volunteer their free time to set up anti-knife initiatives.

SAY NO 2 KNIVES

Sarah Armstrong
age 25



Sarah (left) at *The Peoples' March* in London, September 2008, a march against knife and gun crime. © Say No 2 Knives

Why did you decide to launch the website Say No 2 Knives?

I was 19 years old when I was first attacked. I had been working in a pub in Beckenham and as I left work one evening two youths of about 15 years old approached me and demanded I hand over my phone. I refused, there was a scuffle, and it wasn't until they had run away that I realised I had been stabbed in the face. I reported the incident but no arrests were made.

About 3 months later the same youths recognised me and attacked me again, this time stabbing me in the arm. It might have been a revenge attack, I'm not sure. Whatever their motives, I was left incredibly shaken and I moved from London for a while in order to come to terms with what had happened to me. My attackers have never been caught and I found Victim Support and the police to be frustratingly unhelpful.

On returning to London I decided to try to make a little difference and help other people who have been through similar experiences. In 2008 I launched the website Say No 2 Knives which quickly became

very successful. I was getting hits after hits, which really encouraged me and proved that there was a demand for information. The website provides statistics and facts, as well as offering help to those who have been affected by knife crime.

What activities have you been involved in since setting up Say No 2 Knives?

Quite often school pupils and teachers contact me, asking me to talk about my experience and the realities of knife crime. I've also attended conferences, met the Shadow Justice Minister at the House of Commons, worked with the Youth Council in Bromley, and become involved in Mothers Against Murder and Aggression, a UK-wide charity offering support to those affected by serious crime. I am also trying to set up my own charity to create support groups specifically for victims of knife crime.

What do you think is behind the perceived increase in knife crime?

It is my opinion that gang culture is largely to blame for the increase in knife carrying. It is crazy because so many knives are used against their owner; the statistics clearly show how dangerous it is to carry a knife. I also think that press coverage isn't helping the situation at all; by highlighting the attacks and naming those involved, the press is giving the offenders attention and within a gang this equals respect and notoriety. To be reported in the press increases an individual's reputation as someone not to mess with.

What would you like to see being done to tackle knife crime?

I think the government has some good approaches to tackling the issue but more could definitely be done. For example, stop and search leads to a great number of knives being pulled from our streets, but it needs to happen frequently. I also think that

sentencing needs to be rethought as to me 4 years is nothing for carrying a weapon that could potentially kill someone.

Young people also need better role models, but perhaps they need them before they get involved in gangs because once they are 'in' it becomes very hard to reach them.

Parents could also help by checking that their children aren't carrying a knife if they suspect that they are involved in a gang.

I would also like to see this issue discussed with kids as part of the national curriculum.

If you could say anything to a young visitor to this exhibition, what would it be?

It would simply be this: please, please do not pick up a knife.

IDONTCARRYAKNIFE.ORG

Holly Watson

age 19



Holly Watson © idontcarryaknife.org

How and why did you decide to start an anti-knife campaign?

My older brother, Lewis, was killed in a knife attack on 26th September 2009. He was 23 years old. This experience has had a huge impact on my life. I was just 16 years old when he died, but going through the trauma of losing a family member and the experience of the court case forced me to grow up.

I decided to set up IDontCarryAKnife.org because after Lewis' death I remember thinking to myself that I could not bear it if another family had to go through what we went through. I decided that if I could stop just one person from carrying a knife then it would be worth it.

In 2010, Battlefront, a Channel 4 project, offered me the chance to become an anti-knife campaigner. I set up my website and within months I had launched a knife amnesty called Bin A Blade in my local area. Over 6,000 knives were handed in! In 2011 I went to the Home Office to sit on the Guns, Gangs and Knives Young People's Working

Group, and I was even invited to meet Cherie Blair to discuss my campaign.

What has been your biggest challenge in setting up IDontCarryAKnife.org?

I think the biggest challenge that I have personally faced in setting up this campaign is overcoming my low confidence. Before Lewis' death I had been quite shy and at first I didn't think anyone would listen to me, but the public response has been fantastic and I have become much more confident in public speaking.

What would you like to see being done to tackle knife crime?

Knife crime is such a huge problem but if the government could provide more funding then the police could increase stop and searches and increase their presence on the streets; I really think this would help. I also think that sentencing needs to be much tougher as a deterrent.

What message would you like visitors to this exhibition to take away with them when they leave?

My message to visitors to this exhibition would be simple: carrying a knife is not cool and can end you up in prison, so please just think twice.

LIVES NOT KNIVES

Eliza Rebeiro

age 18



Eliza at Youth Vote London © Lives Not Knives

How and why did you get involved in anti-knife campaigning?

I founded Lives Not Knives in 2007 at the age of 14 after being excluded from mainstream school and exposed to street violence and gang culture. The campaign was created as a statement but developed rapidly into an organisation as the issue affected so many young people in the Croydon community. Lives Not Knives has now become a community interest company and works to prevent young people from getting involved in gang culture and youth violence whilst using restorative justice and ex-gang members to inform young people about the dangers of involvement in criminal activities. Who knows more about gangs than ex-gang members themselves?

What have been the biggest challenges involved in setting up Lives Not Knives?

Obtaining sustainable funding and ensuring that our work programme is SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, timely).

What kind of activities have you undertaken since setting up Lives Not Knives?

- *Making t-shirts for fundraising that say 'Lives Not Knives'*
- *Organising a party to prove that youth can have fun without violence*
- *Organising a seminar called Speak Up, Stand Tall to tell our community what's going on through a younger perspective, and a seminar called Putting the Record Straight sharing each young person from Lives Not Knives' different story with gang culture*
- *Publishing Lives Not Knives books*
- *Taking part in Channel 4's Battlefront in 2010*
- *Training Lives Not Knives mentors with Battlefront and Livity*
- *Undertaking Leap Confronting Conflict training*
- *Delivering Lives Not Knives roadshows in local Schools*
- *Starting an apprenticeship with Lives Not Knives 3 days a week*
- *Speaking on prime time news and live debate shows*

What do you consider to have been your greatest success so far?

I am proud of raising the profile of young people doing positive things in Croydon, and personally I have developed generally as a person and now have a better understanding on how to improve the status of many other young people who have had a similar journey to me.

What are your future plans for Lives Not Knives?

Lives Not Knives will expand over the next 3 years into all London Boroughs. It will be approved as a registered charity and increase the profile of young people undertaking in positive activities across London.

What has the public response been like since starting your campaign?

The community has been very supportive of the campaign and engages in the project. Lives Not Knives is always in the London media and the older generation from London will always have valid questions or discussion points for the young mentors. We have been offered various training schemes but also just a nice tweet or Facebook message.



Lives Not Knives campaigners, from left to right: Tara, Eliza, Aaron, Mikey and Diogo © Lives Not Knives

Aaron Roach Bridgeman
age 25

What led you to decide to support the Lives Not Knives campaign?

My observation of the youth around me and those that I know and knew, added to the fact I carried mine around for years. It all added up and has to me become a real issue of relevance in need of serious and active addressing. I've seen too many people lose their life in more ways than one due to this omnipresent 'knife culture' in not just London but UK youth. I've seen it everywhere.

How had knives affected your life before you started campaigning?

I carried (a knife) myself and was willing to use it for 'protection' when I was young. I also saw someone's father get stabbed at my high school during a fight. I knew of countless stabbings in my local areas and lost a friend to jail for an indefinite amount of years for crimes related to stabbings.

Why do you think knife crime appears to be affecting more young people today?

Without sounding politically incorrect or a pessimistic - the youth are lost! Inspired by the wrong things in VERY strong ways. Lack of guidance has contributed to their lack of direction. As has always been the problem. Many of the youth only see as far as the next few months. They require foresight and to be shown explicitly the other positive routes in life and where you can end up as well as where they will end up if choosing to live a life of lawlessness with such acts as carrying and using knives.

What are your views on how the government is tackling the issue today?

The only thing I can say is that I am happy that they have mentioned and brought it (knife crime) up. With the high rate of knife crime, especially in London, I guess they couldn't ignore it any further.... HOWEVER, there is no point in talking about it BUT doing nothing about it. To make matters worse there are too many unfounded claims based on manipulated statistics without careful analysis. It is subjectively clear through experience and knowledge that we are still seeing the same rate if not more in regards to these type of crimes, albeit the number of lives being lost lessening as Mr. Boris Johnson tried to use as an improvement factor.

If you wish to help and deal with the youth and youth problems, you need to look to the youth and work closer and bring about more opportunities with organisations like Lives Not Knives. We are of our own accord taking the actions to help...stop this type of mentality in our youth, not just talk about it.

What message would you like visitors to this exhibition to take away with them when they leave?

The one message I'd like visitors to take away is to not be judgmental and not to tar all with the same brush. We do have a problem within our youth and with the problem of knife crime. However this isn't ALL our youth, so please do not judge and treat them all in this way.

Such treatment serves to perpetuate living up to stereotype and progresses the problems further. Also you must also look at the root(s) to the problems before you chastise the result or ending phenomena. We have issues to address as a people, as a society and as a country first surrounding financial stability, class, race, etc that are served no good by factors such as prejudice, stereotypes and a mentality of writing off or allowing a certain group to self-destruct. We must help each other and we can start by making an effort to try and understand one other.

Diogo Figueiredo
18 years old

How had knife crime affected your life before you started campaigning?

I related to Lives Not Knives because I have friends who have been victims and perpetrators of knife crime and thought that my knowledge and experiences on knife crime can help others to not get involved.

What do you think are the key reasons why knife crime appears to be affecting more young people today?

Protection as they say, but personally the people that do carry knives may stab someone not attending to kill them and one person's life affects so many others.

What are your views on how the government is tackling the issue today?

I think more could be done because personally I don't see much being done. The government needs to invest and be aware of projects such as Lives Not Knives because a young persons issue is better coming from a young person and not an older person who has no understanding of what's going on at the moment.

What message would you like visitors to this exhibition to take away with them?

Go and find out more about what can be done and if you are involved in a gang and want to get away from the culture there are people willing to help you. If you're not in a gang and were never involved in the culture still help because it is a worth while cause.

Tara Norwood
age 18

Why did you decide to join the Lives Not Knives campaign?

I joined to support a friend's cause and to help my younger brother in getting away from the gang culture before he got too heavily involved, as he was excluded from school.

What do you think are the key reasons why knife crime appears to be affecting more young people today?

The government isn't listening to young people and there are not enough resources for the young people that need the support.

What are your views on how the government is tackling the issue today?

Of course more could be done and that is what Lives Not Knives is doing. The government needs to recognise the youth projects and give funding and support to the right projects.

What message would you like visitors to this exhibition to take away with them when they leave?

Support every cause you can to help young people and make sure you support Lives Not Knives because we help the youth of tomorrow and today.



Gary (centre) and Tara (right) at a Leap Confronting Conflict workshop
© Lives Not Knives

Gary Mathew Hurd
age 20

What led you to decide to support the Lives Not Knives campaign?

Friends of mine were heavily involved in gang crime and my brother was influenced by gangs. I wanted to help people going through their teenage years as of now, to avoid getting involved. So I joined Lives Not Knives because it's all about prevention.

What do you think are the key reasons why knife crime appears to be affecting more young people today?

Young people are easily influenced by people around them and they feel they have no positive activities to get involved in. Young people also have money issues and they can make money doing crime.

Do you think more could be done by the government to help tackle knife crime?

I believe that the government isn't supplying enough funding to support youth activities or projects, such as community clubs and football clubs. More funding, to the right organisations, would help empower young people and redirect their energies.

How did Leap Confronting Conflict training help you as a campaigner?

Conflict resolution training has helped me to become more aware and encouraged me to get more young people involved.

What would you like to say to visitors to this exhibition?

Knife crime needs to be prevented and we need the right people to stand up against the issue and every person to know that the issue is worth standing up against. This should not be ignored.



**Kareem Andre Lloyd
Maizi
age 18**

Kareem facilitating a Confronting Conflict workshop © Lives Not Knives

What led you to decide to support the Lives Not Knives campaign?

After I was stabbed twice, I didn't want teenagers to go down the same road that I went down so I decided that I was going to make a difference.

How had knife crime affected your life before you started campaigning?

I was suffering mentally, physically and emotionally because of the stabbings.

What do you think are the key reasons why knife crime appears to be affecting more young people today?

It is easier to carry a knife than any other weapon, and people see knives as a form of either protection or attack.

What are your views on how the government is tackling the issue today? Do you think more could be done?

The government is trying very hard, but they need new methods. They need to give extra support to organisations and charities such as Lives Not Knives.

What message would you like visitors to this exhibition to take away with them?

Knife crime will lead to destruction and could result in many more lives being taken, that's why people need to leave knives and any other weapon at home and deal with issues in a better way.

EXHIBITION PARTNERS

THE CENTRE FOR CRIME AND JUSTICE STUDIES

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies is an independent public interest charity whose mission is to inspire enduring change by promoting understanding of social harm, the centrality of social justice and the limits of criminal justice.

The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies has produced several reports concerning knife crime in the UK including *Knife Crime: A review of evidence and policy* (2007) and *Young people, knives and guns: A comprehensive review, analysis and critique of gun and knife crime strategies* (2009). These reports are available publicly via The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies website.

www.crimeandjustice.org.uk

LEAP CONFRONTING CONFLICT

Leap Confronting Conflict (Leap) works with young people aged 11-25 to help them understand and manage conflict in their lives and communities. Leap has been working with Lives Not Knives for over two years, providing their volunteers with conflict resolution training. Predominantly this has been through the Quarrel Shop - a 60 hour accredited training programme that uses games, role play and exercises to enable young people to gain a greater awareness of themselves and their patterns of behaviour, and supports them to make positive choices in their lives. At the end of the course, the participants design workshops to tackle knife crime and promote conflict resolution skills to their peers and deliver these workshops in a range of settings in their own communities.

Leap is now also providing mentoring tools training to some of these Lives Not Knives Quarrel Shop graduates, as part of a Home Office funded mentoring service that Lives Not Knives are offering to young people in Croydon.

www.leapcc.org.uk

SAY NO 2 KNIVES

Say No 2 Knives offers help to those affected by knife crime and provides statistics and facts for those wanting more information. Say No 2 Knives was founded by Sarah Armstrong after she became a victim of knife crime herself, and she hopes to set up a charity to create support groups for other victims of knife crime.

www.sayno2knives.co.uk

LIVES NOT KNIVES

Lives Not Knives is dedicated to showing young people the many positive options that are available to them, and to help those involved with or in danger of becoming involved in a gang. Lives Not Knives was founded by Eliza Rebeiro.

www.livesnotknives.org

IDONTCARRYAKNIFE.ORG

IDontCarryAKnife.org provides information for those who want more information about what steps are being taken to tackle knife crime, and some of the ways to deal with it. It also aims to help encourage those who do carry knives to understand the danger this poses to themselves and others, and to look to change their behaviour. IDontCarryAKnife.org was founded by Holly Watson.

www.idontcarryaknife.org

SUPPORT AND ADVICE

There are numerous charities and organisations offering confidential support and information to those affected by knife crime.

CRIMESTOPPERS

Crimestoppers is an independent charity helping to solve crimes. If you want to report a crime but feel uncomfortable going directly to the police you can call Crimestoppers anonymously. Their helpline (0800 555 111) is open 24 hours and calls are not traced.

www.crimestoppers-uk.org

KNIFECRIMES

Knifecrimes is a charity that provides help and support to families and friends affected by serious violent crime or bereaved as a result of murder or manslaughter. Their website provides information about knife, gun and gang related violence.

www.knifecrimes.org

GET CONNECTED

Get Connected is a helpline and email service for young people up to 25 years old, providing support whatever the problem. The helpline (0808 808 4994) is open from 1-11pm every day, or you can email help@getconnected.org.uk.

www.getconnected.org.uk

VICTIM SUPPORT

Victim Support is an independent charity for victims and witnesses of crime in England and Wales. Their helpline (0845 30 30 900) is open Monday to Friday, from 9am-9pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am-7pm, and Bank Holidays 9am-5pm, or you can email info@victimsupport.org.uk.

www.victimsupport.org.uk

PARENTLINE

Parentline is a confidential service offering information, advice, guidance and support on any aspect of parenting and family life. Their helpline (0808 800 2222) is open daily 7am to midnight.

www.familylives.org.uk

MOTHERS AGAINST VIOLENCE

Mothers Against Violence is a charity providing mentoring support, educational awareness of gun and knife crime, counselling, workshops, and outreach work which includes campaigning for positive change in the local community. Originally founded in Greater Manchester, the charity now has regional links in Leeds and London. Telephone 0161 226 8134, or email office@mavuk.org.

www.mavuk.org

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- ⁱ *Eades, C., Grimshaw, R., Silvestri, A., and Solomon, E. (2007) 'Knife crime: A review of evidence and policy', London: Centre for Crime and Justice Studies*
- ⁱⁱ *World Health Organisation (2010) 'Preventing violence and knife crime among young people', Copenhagen, Denmark: WHO Europe*
- ⁱⁱⁱ These figures do not cover people who attended an Accident and Emergency department but were not admitted to hospital.
Berman, G. (2011) 'Knife crime statistics Standard Note: SN/SG/4304': House of Commons Library
- ^{iv} *Bellis, M. et al (2008) 'Contribution of violence to health inequalities in England: demographics and trends in emergency hospital admissions for assault': Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, vol. 62, pp.1064-1071*
- ^v As above
- ^{vi} *World Health Organisation (2010) 'Preventing violence and knife crime among young people', Copenhagen, Denmark: WHO Europe*
Silvestri, A., Oldfield, M., Squires, P., and Grimshaw, R. (2009) 'Young people, knives and guns. A comprehensive review, analysis, and critique of gun and knife crime strategies', London: Centre for Crime and Justice Studies
- ^{vii} *IPSOS MORI (2009) 'Youth Survey 2009', Research study conducted for the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales*
- ^{viii} *World Health Organisation (2010) 'Preventing violence and knife crime among young people', Copenhagen, Denmark: WHO Europe*
- ^{ix} *Silvestri, A., Oldfield, M., Squires, P., and Grimshaw, R. (2009) 'Young people, knives and guns. A comprehensive review, analysis, and critique of gun and knife crime strategies', London: Centre for Crime and Justice Studies*
- ^x *IPSOS MORI (2009) 'Youth Survey 2009', Research study conducted for the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales*
- ^{xi} *Ward, L., Nicholas, S., and Willoughby M. (2011) 'An assessment of the tackling Knives and Serious Youth Violence Action Programme (TKAP) – Phase II', London: Home Office*
- ^{xii} *Silvestri, A., Oldfield, M., Squires, P., and Grimshaw, R. (2009) 'Young people, knives and guns. A comprehensive review, analysis, and critique of gun and knife crime strategies', London: Centre for Crime and Justice Studies*
- ^{xiii} As above
- ^{xiv} *World Health Organisation (2010) 'Preventing violence and knife crime among young people', Copenhagen, Denmark: WHO*