



Home Office



Lesson plan for key stage 4

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PSHE
Association

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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)	Students reflect on the views expressed by each of the three characters in the films	10min
_3 Decision making	Students discuss the influences behind young people's decision making	10min
_4 Decision tree	Students explore the consequences of different decisions	10min
_4 Changing the conversation	Students work in pairs to challenge comments about knife crime	5min
_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, in which case the aim should be to get to a society where no one feels they have to, and that is a joint responsibility for everyone.

Core activities

Real life stories

10 min

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

[Cameron's story](#)

[Meghan's story](#)

[Sean's story](#)

[Combined stories 'We are knife free'](#)

Encourage students to discuss in pairs or small groups as they complete Resource 2, then take feedback as a class, drawing out the key learning that:

- Whilst students may have different views, most research suggests that violence is a learned behaviour from a variety of sources (e.g. media, friends, family, environment). What this means is that violence can also be unlearned, and that all people have the potential and opportunity to change.
- Friends and peers can have a significant influence both on how a young person behaves and how they are perceived by others. That is why it is important for young people to think carefully about the friends they spend time with, and to know their own mind and have strategies to respond to friends who encourage them to behave in a way they are not comfortable with.
- 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.

Challenge

What are the similarities and differences between these characters' experiences?

Decision making

10 min

Remind students that many young people 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 might help a person decide to go knife free)
- Negative influences (those that might encourage negative behaviours, such as knife carrying)

During feedback, students are likely to identify:

- Positive influences: their friends and family, having other interests and hobbies, having goals for the future, realising talent and potential, personal safety, self-esteem and confidence, support from other services and organisations, realising they could make a difference, recognising the consequences of knife carrying
- Negative influences: friends who are carrying knives, previous experiences, difficult home life, the media, misconceptions about knife carrying, fear

Decision tree

10 min

Focusing on one of the three characters (Cameron, Meghan or Sean) ask students to work in groups to create a decision tree for their character, starting with the decision to become knife free or not.

The decision tree should follow two paths: What is the person's life like now because they decided to stop carrying a knife? What might have happened to them if they had chosen to keep carrying a knife? Remind students to keep this activity safe by being sensitive with their suggestions.

Challenge

Ask students to include in their decision tree consequences for the individual, their family and their career.

Changing the conversation

5 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

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](#).