



# 10 years of No Knives, Better Lives

#10YearsofNKBL

No knives, better lives.  
[www.noknivesbetterlives.com](http://www.noknivesbetterlives.com)



safer  
scotland  
SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

▲▲ Glasgow  
sheds murder  
capital  
reputation as  
youth crime  
falls ▼▼

**The Times, 5/6/19**

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# Background

## Young people and knife crime in Scotland

At its inception in 2009, No Knives, Better Lives was a response to the very high incidence of knife crime in Scotland and the corresponding high numbers of young people charged with handling an offensive weapon. This position has changed dramatically over the last decade.

Between 2008-09 and 2017-18, the number of violent crimes recorded by the police in Scotland has fallen by 43%, while recorded crimes of handling an offensive weapon (where not used to commit another offence) have fallen by 60%. The number of young people, under the age of 18, convicted of handling an offensive weapon has fallen by 85% (from 456 in 2008-09 to 68 in 2017-18). The Scottish Crime and Justice Survey also shows a 46% fall between 2008-09 and 2017-18 in violent incidents experienced by adults in Scotland, and that 12% of adults thought that people carrying knives was common in their area in 2017-18, down from 22% in 2009-10.

The general trend has been a large reduction in violent crime and weapons possession over the last decade. No Knives, Better Lives attracted a lot of positive publicity for playing its part in helping to make Scotland a safer place for young people.

Over the ten-year period from 2008-09 to 2017-18, the number of crimes of handling an offensive weapon recorded by the police in Glasgow City decreased by 71%.



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# Who are we?

## Tackling knife carrying amongst young people

No Knives, Better Lives (NKBL) is a national capacity-building programme that supports primary prevention work related to knife carrying in Scotland.

In 2009, the NKBL National Delivery Team began supporting partners in 11 selected local authority areas to implement NKBL. In 2014, this support became available to all local authorities in Scotland.

Our approach to prevention is informed by the principles and values of youth work and a public health approach to violence prevention.

## A 'public health' approach

Scotland has adopted a public health approach to tackling violence as advocated by the World Health Organisation – treating violence as an infection that can be cured. This includes prevention activity and early intervention.

## Why is youth work important to prevention?

The goal of prevention is to address the reasons why somebody might be vulnerable to taking a risk, such as carrying a knife. There are many things, we as a community can do to build young people's protective factors to prevent them from taking unnecessary risks.

Youth work has a strong focus on building coping strategies and resilience in young people, while also connecting them to the help and support services in the community and building their skills to access these services.



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# What do we do?

There are two strands to No Knives, Better Lives engagement programme:

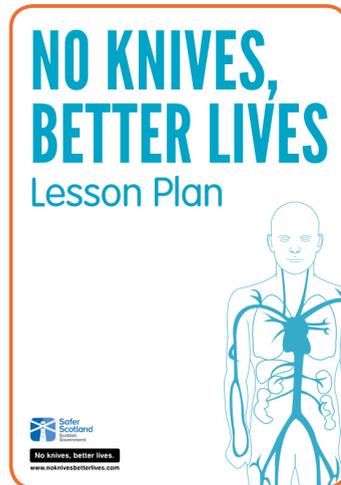
## Strand One

Communicating prevention messages to young people across Scotland using social marketing and youth work methods to communicate information about the risks and consequences of knife carrying, positive decision making and the importance of reporting knife carrying.

## Strand Two

Capacity building work with key partners to support the delivery of local prevention work with young people.

NKBL provides training, networking events, and relevant up to date resources and merchandise to support local practitioners.



▲▲ Knife crime  
is soaring  
nationwide.  
Scotland could  
hold the  
answer ▲▲

**The Telegraph, 5/11/18**

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# Our achievements

Over ten years No Knives, Better Lives has delivered the following:

- NKBL Peer Education sessions
- NKBL Practitioner training on our toolkits and resources
- NKBL resource development including activity toolkits and films
- WeCTV Project (We-CTV is a NKBL programme and competition where young people are involved in production events to learn about knife crime and produce films to spread messages to their peers)
- Supported strategic approach at a local level
- Schools programmes such as 'Balisong' a play about knife carrying and being an active bystander engaging young people to talk about the issue
- Local activities such as sports days
- Outdoor marketing campaigns
- Digital marketing campaigns
- Developed digital resources
- Developed a NKBL Network for partners
- National events such as conferences



**461** peer educators trained  
in the last 5 years

'Balisong' the school knife  
carrying prevention play  
was seen by over

**20,000**  
pupils in 2018-19

Developed the

**4R's**

of prevention work  
RESILIENCE  
REASSURANCE  
RESPONSIBILITY  
RISKS

Worked in

**EVERY**

Local Authority  
area in Scotland  
in 2018/19

**RELEASED**

'Mark's Story'  
in 2015

Have reached out to over

**100,000**

young people in ten years

**£500,000**

anti-violence fund distributed  
in 2011 as part of CashBack  
for Communities

**8** PDF Toolkits available  
to download

Developed films, quizzes,  
and animated features available

**1,332**

practitioners  
trained in the last  
5 years to deliver  
NKBL sessions

NKBLs website  
has seen the number of

**VIEWS**

from parents,  
young people and  
practitioners increase

**FREE**

to download  
for use with  
young people

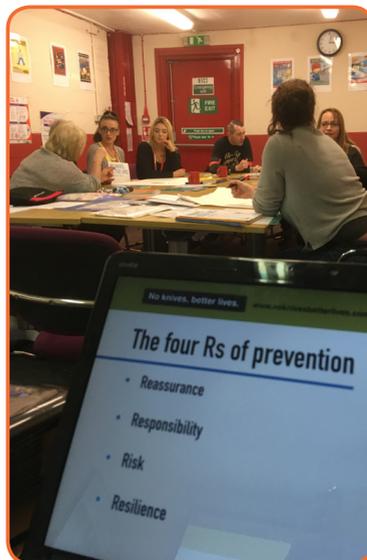
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# 10 years how we have changed

## Introducing the four Rs

The four R's is No Knives, Better Lives' shorthand for what is important for young people to know in order to keep themselves safe. These are now the key prevention messages used by No Knives, Better Lives and are entirely based on what we have learned over the last ten years.

- **Reassurance** - Hardly anyone carries a knife
- **Responsibility/Reporting** - It's okay to report knife carrying
- **Risks and Consequences** - You are more at risk of harm if you carry a knife
- **Resilience** - Have the confidence to resist knife carrying in the first place



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# Reassurance

Young people have told us that they carry knives because they are afraid. In other words, they carry knives for their own protection.

**“I started carrying because everyone else was.”**

**“I carry a knife because I worry about going into certain parts of town.”**

In the early days of No Knives, Better Lives, the campaign used many more images of knives and the violent consequences of knife crime (injuries and death). We now believe that you only increase the fear factor for young people and may inadvertently increase the risk of them carrying a knife by showing scary images. Rather than show these first in the hope of frightening young people out of carrying

knives, we reassure young people of the following:

- Knife crime is uncommon
- You are unlikely to be hurt by a knife

In 2019 we launched our ‘stock images’ project to reassure the public that knife carrying was not the norm.



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# Case Study

## Case Study

West Dunbartonshire

### SAFETY4KIDS – PEER LED SESSIONS

In 2013, 12 young peer educators delivered the NKBL messages to 884 P7 pupils through group work activities.

**REASSURANCE** – Young people were inspired by the peer educators to think that knife crime was not 'normal' in their area.



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# Responsibility

One of the most important aspects of prevention work is to empower young people to take responsibility for themselves and others. The message that No Knives, Better Lives imparts is that it is important to tell someone if they know that a person is carrying a knife.

Taking responsibility and telling someone may well prevent a much more serious offence.

Young people may worry that telling on someone for carrying a knife would make them a grass. We stress the need for reducing anxiety around this – there are ways of reporting that are confidential. However there is still work to be done around the issue of grassing. We reiterate that you do not have to keep anyone else's dangerous secrets.

Over the last ten years we have developed the 'bystander approach' and actively encourage young people to be empowered to intervene if they know

that someone is carrying a knife. Young people can do this by:

- **Telling a trusted adult**
- **Reporting anonymously to one of our national partners such as Fearless [www.fearless.org](http://www.fearless.org)**

The 'Balisong' play launched in 2017 encourages young people to become active bystanders.



# Risks

Most prevention work is based on the principle of information giving – that armed with the correct information, young people are likely to make better-informed choices. Information must be given free of judgement, so that young people can make up their own minds.

If they make a choice based on facts, it is much more likely to have a lasting impact on future behaviours.

Often the commonest myths originate from what young people are informally telling each other. By giving young people access to the correct information, particularly around risks and consequences, young people are not only able to make better-informed choices for themselves but are also able to inform and educate their peers.

The biggest myth and therefore the biggest challenge for practitioners is to convince young people that carrying a knife will not make them safer. In fact, the reverse is true.

- **Just give the facts**
- **Be straightforward**
- **Emphasise personal consequences**

The short educational film, 'Mark's Story' emphasises the personal consequences of knife carrying.

Produced in 2016 it follows the story of Mark and his family... One Knife, Many Victims.



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# Resilience

Often defined as the ability to bounce back, resilience and its importance in adolescent development, has been recognised for many years as a key trait of people who can either avoid, manage or bounce back from adverse or risky situations. Resilience is at its strongest when a young person feels connected, safe and well informed. These 'protective' factors can be significantly strengthened if the following conditions are met:

- **A safe community**
- **Trusted adults**
- **Peer support and**
- **Factual information**

No Knives, Better Lives advocates a 'joined up' approach where measures are put in place that make a young person feel comfortable, safe and valued in their community. Everyone

has a part to play in preventing knife carrying amongst young people.

One trusted adult has been shown to make a difference. Youth workers are well placed to intervene where they suspect a young person is at risk of knife carrying.



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# Case Study

East Ayrshire

## **EXTREME GAMES**

In summer 2013, more than 300 young people attended a community based games event held in Kilmarnock that featured skate/BMX/graffiti/music and lots of NKBL messaging through marketing, banners, merchandise and the presence of NKBL local partners.

Through this event and considerable follow up, NKBL messaging reached over 1,000 local young people.

**RESILIENCE** – Young people reported feeling safer in their community as a result of the event, as well as more knowledgeable about local youth work services.



▲▲ Scotland  
started treating  
knife crime  
as a public  
health issue –  
and violence  
plummeted ▲▲

**The Guardian, 14/12/18**

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# Is there still a need for prevention work?

Given the overall dramatic decrease in the incidence of knife crime and handling of offensive weapons since 2009, is there still a need for knife crime prevention work with young people?

**Yes** – because statistics show that there are still young people carrying and using knives.

**Yes** – because prevention work shouldn't be initiated in response to a crisis but, by its very nature should be something we do to prevent that crisis from occurring in the first place and, importantly, to prevent it from reoccurring in the future.

**Yes** - because empowering educational work with young people is critical to prevention. If we do more of the prevention work early on, then it might not be necessary to have expensive youth justice or custodial interventions.

**Yes** – because one incident is one too many and has a devastating impact not just on the lives of those directly involved but on the families, friends and communities.

**Yes** – because it is impossible to control access to knives, therefore we have a massive duty of care to educate young people to be responsible around knives.



# Contact

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 Youth work  
and positive  
prevention  
have been  
key 

**The Guardian, 3/12/17**

No knives, better lives.



[www.noknivesbetterlives.com](http://www.noknivesbetterlives.com)



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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**Investors in Diversity**

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