

~~No knives~~
Better lives



NAE DANGER

Young Person's Guide

Helping young people understand how to safely intervene in a situation when someone they know is carrying a knife.

"NAE DANGER"

'Nae danger' is a phrase commonly used by Scottish people meaning 'not a chance,' or 'no way!'

WE WERE JUST FIVE ORDINARY TEENAGERS.
NO DIFFERENT TO ANYONE ELSE.



Who is it for?

This resource aims to help young people understand how to safely intervene in a situation where they know or suspect that someone they know is carrying a knife. It introduces our approach to being an active bystander, equipping young people with the skills and knowledge to take action. We aim to empower them to confidently debate and challenge the best course of action in such situations. This makes the resource different from many others that automatically reach for 'reporting' as the only viable response. We want to offer a viable alternative to young people who see 'grassing' on their mates as unacceptable and thereby allow knife carrying to continue. It is aimed at 10-16 year olds and can also be used as a training tool for peer educators, youth workers, teachers and others working with young people within the community.

SCOTLAND IS A MUCH MORE PEACEFUL AND SAFER PLACE THAN IT WAS TEN YEARS AGO. NOT MANY PEOPLE KNOW THIS.

GLASGOW SHEDS MURDER CAPITAL REPUTATION AS YOUTH CRIME FALLS

Scotland started treating knife crime as a public health issue - and violence plummeted.

SCOTLAND IS SHOWING HOW TO WIN THE FIGHT AGAINST KNIFE CRIME

How Scotland reduced knife deaths among young people

I WAS WORRIED ABOUT MY PAL. HE WAS BEING BADLY BULLIED AND WAS VERY QUIET AND WITHDRAWN.

ARE YOU OK?

HAVE YOU SEEN WHAT THOSE NUMPTIES SAY THEY'RE GONNAE DAE TAE ME?



What is an active bystander?

An active bystander is someone who sees or hears about a situation where a friend or peer is doing something risky—like carrying a knife—and takes action to help in a safe and supportive way. Being an active bystander doesn't mean putting yourself in danger. It's about taking steps to make a difference and potentially save a life.

Intervening earlier if you know a friend is upset or in trouble with an individual or a gang could prevent them from knife carrying in the first case.



The truth about knife carrying

Carrying a knife is not normal, and it's important to understand that the majority of young people do not carry weapons.

Sometimes, the media can make knife carrying seem more common than it actually is. Headlines and stories often focus on the worst cases because they grab attention, but this doesn't reflect the reality for most young people. Many people think teenagers are the main ones involved in knife crime, but statistics show that men around 30 years old are actually the most likely to carry and be affected by knife crime.

In 2016, violent crime in Scotland was at its lowest level in 41 years, and recorded crimes of handling an offensive weapon were the lowest they had been in 31 years. Convictions for young people under the age of 19 handling offensive weapons dropped by 82% between 2006/07 and 2014/15, from 811 convictions to just 146. Year-on-year, knife crime in Scotland showed a consistent decline.

However, since 2016, two-thirds of local authorities in Scotland (21 out of 32) have reported a small increase in offences involving the handling of offensive weapons. This rise coincides with prominent cases where young people have used knives, highlighting the need for continued vigilance and education.

Big issues like poverty and inequality play a role in youth violence, and recent challenges—like Covid-19 and economic recession—have made life more uncertain for many young people. Some might feel like carrying a knife is a way to stay safe, even though it actually increases risk.

While Scotland's overall picture is still one of steep declines in knife carrying and violence over the past decades, recent statistics indicate a reversal of this trend. This makes prevention work as vital as ever.

Why do young people carry knives?

Young people may carry knives for various reasons, including peer pressure, fear, a false sense of protection, or simply to show off. However, when knife carrying becomes normalised, fear escalates, leading even more young people to carry knives.

Ironically, carrying a knife actually increases your risk of being injured. Your own weapon could be turned against you, or someone might attack first in so-called 'self-defence.' Even the mere rumour that someone is carrying a knife can spread fear, prompting others to arm themselves 'just in case'—even when there is no real threat.

Social media and the news can sometimes amplify these fears, creating the impression that knife carrying is widespread when, in reality, it is not. Carrying a knife is not normal and most young people never carry knives.

What about grassing?

'Grassing' is a slang word meaning informing the authorities. It is commonly used in relation with reporting crimes. In some communities in Scotland there can be an unwritten code about not informing the police, even when you hear about a serious crime. This is reinforced by both culture (we don't grass) and fear (grasses get slashes). The threat can be real or imagined.

This resource isn't about forcing you to report knife carrying if you don't feel comfortable or are worried about being labeled a 'grass.' There are different ways to be an active bystander, and reporting is just one option. You might choose to talk to your friend to understand why they've started carrying a knife, or you could seek support from a trusted adult who can help you figure out what to do. The most important thing is finding a way to respond that feels safe and right for you.

SO I DECIDED TO CALL IT IN ANONYMOUSLY TO FEARLESS. THERE WAS NAЕ DANGER I WAS LETTING ANYTHING BAD HAPPEN TO ONE OF MY BESTIES.



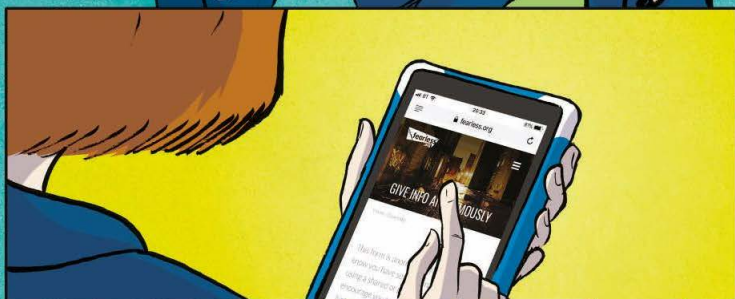
HOWEVER...

We would strongly encourage you to tell someone if you know about knife carrying, especially if you know that there is a potential for violence and death. This is different and potentially very dangerous. You can always do this anonymously if you want. Saving a life outweighs the fear of being called a 'grass' – what if it was a member of your family who was saved? What if it was your best friend? Being a so-called 'grass' can actually fit with being a good friend. You could save a life or prevent someone ending up in prison.

If you know someone is in danger of being hurt or killed, then phone Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or complete an online form at Fearless www.fearless.org

YOU WILL REMAIN ANONYMOUS.

YOU WILL NOT BE AT RISK FOR GRASSING.



How to step up and help your pal

The STEPS approach was designed in consultation with young people to help you think through how you can safely and effectively support a friend or peer who is carrying a knife - whether it's because they're scared, trying to fit in, or showing off. You don't have to follow the steps in a specific order, what matters is finding the safest and most comfortable way for you to help your friend.

Step Up

Recognise the problem and intervene directly.

Act in the moment to address the behaviour. This could involve calmly talking to the person who is about to cause harm or the person experiencing it. Only step up if you feel it's safe and appropriate to do so. Only Step Up if you feel it's safe and appropriate to do so.

Tell An Adult

Get help from a trusted adult such as a youth worker or teacher.

If someone's safety is at risk, reporting the issue—even anonymously through services like Fearless—can make a big difference. This isn't about grassing; it's about getting the right support for you and your friend.

Evidence

Take notes of what has happened, including what you saw, heard, or know about the situation.

Be aware if you take photos or videos, it can make things worse, upset the people involved, or spread hurtful content if shared. Filming might also make others feel unsafe and could get you into trouble. If the situation becomes a criminal investigation, the Police could confiscate your phone. Instead, focus on remembering or writing down what you saw and heard so you can explain it clearly if needed.

Pull Attention Away

Take the focus off the problem and shift their attention to something safer.

This can de-escalate tension and create an opportunity to address the issue later in a safer environment. This could include changing a subject to something more positive or asking them to do something different with you.

Support Later

Follow up and check in with the person after the situation.

Checking in privately shows that you care and can help them feel supported in finding safer ways to cope with their situation.

NAE DANGER

STEPS to being an active bystander



An active bystander is someone who takes steps to **safely make a difference** when something isn't right like knife crime or violence.

S

Support Later
Follow up and check in with the person after the situation.

P

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Tell An Adult
Get help from a trusted adult such as a youth worker or teacher.

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Step Up
Recognise the problem and intervene directly.

What Would You Do?
You spot your pal showing off with a knife and making jokes about using it.

Every Step You Take Can Make A Difference.

By being an active bystander you can help keep your friends safe and prevent harm.

Stepping up to be an active bystander

The Scenario

Your friend has been the victim of recent bullying at school. Over the last few months they have been mixing with a 'different' crowd and you haven't seen as much of them. You have noticed some people deliberately provoking them on social media and there is an argument involving your friend in the comments. One day they come into school and show you that they have a knife in their pocket



What can you do in this situation?

Explore different ways you could step up in this situation on the next few pages.



Option 1: Step Up

Recognising that there's a problem and choosing to do something about it. It's easy to ignore a situation or think it's not your place to get involved, but stepping up when it is safe to do so can make a huge difference.

What Would You Do?

- Could you find a safe way to intervene before things get out of hand?
- How could you help them see that carrying a knife isn't the answer?
- What risks could you point out?

What You Could Say:

- "Carrying a knife doesn't make you safer—it puts you at more risk"
- "What if it's used against you?"



Option 2: Tell An Adult

Sometimes the safest and most effective action you can take is to tell someone you trust. This could be a parent, teacher, youth worker or older family member.

What Would You Do?

- Who could you talk to that might be able to help?
- Could you tell someone without your friend knowing it was you?

What You Could Say:

- "I'm worried about my friend—they're carrying a knife because they're scared. Can you help?"
- "I want to tell you something, but I'm nervous about how it will go"
- "Can I stay anonymous?"

Remember:

Telling an adult doesn't make you a 'grass'—it makes you a good friend who's trying to keep everyone safe. If someone is in immediate danger or you're really worried about their safety, you can contact the police. If you want to stay anonymous, you can contact Fearless.

Fearless

www.fearless.org

0800 555 111



Option 3: Evidence

Noticing and remembering key details can help ensure the right support is given. If you're concerned about someone carrying a knife, paying attention to changes in their behaviour or situations around them can help you have a more informed and supportive conversation.

It might be tempting to take photos or videos, but this can make things worse, upset those involved, or even spread harmful content if shared. It could also make others feel unsafe and might get you into trouble. If the situation turns into a police investigation, your phone could be confiscated. Instead, focus on recalling details so you can explain them clearly if needed.

What Would You Do?

- How can you notice changes in your friend's behaviour that might indicate a problem?
- What specific things could you remember or write down to have a more open conversation?
- Who could you talk to if you're worried about someone's safety?

What You Could Say:

- "I've noticed you've been acting differently lately—quieter, avoiding certain places. Is everything okay?"
- "You used to say carrying a knife was a bad idea, but now you're talking about it like it's normal. What changed?"
- "I heard you mention that someone is after you, and I've seen you checking over your shoulder a lot. Are you feeling safe?"
- "Lately, you seem more on edge and not yourself. If something's going on, you can talk to me."
- "I saw you hiding something the other day, and I just want to make sure you're not getting into anything dangerous."



Option 4: Pull Attention Away

Sometimes the best thing you can do in the moment is to distract your friend or shift the focus to something else. This can buy time and help prevent things from escalating.

What Would You Do?

- How could you redirect their attention?
- Could you involve them in something else to defuse the situation?

What You Could Say:

- "Forget that—come play FIFA with us."
- "Mate, put that away and let's go grab something to eat."

Option 5: Support Later

Sometimes, it's not safe or appropriate to step in at the time—but that doesn't mean you can't check in later. After a situation has passed, it's important to reach out and offer support.

Whether your friend was carrying a knife themselves or was affected by someone else who was, they might be feeling a mix of emotions—fear, guilt, anger, or even relief. Letting them know they're not alone and helping them find positive ways forward can make a real difference.

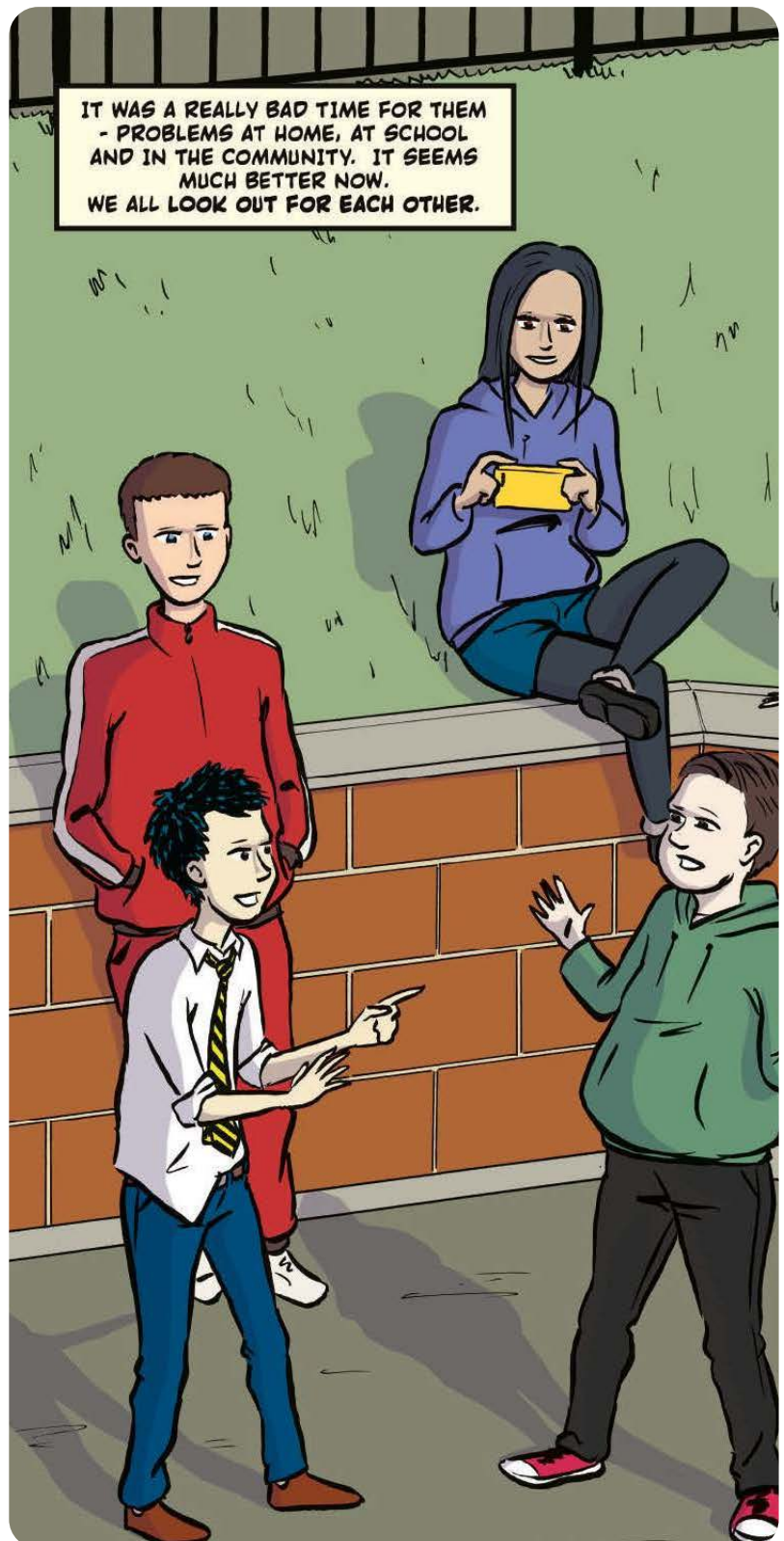
Remember—knife carrying is not normal. Don't let your friends believe it is. When knife carrying becomes normalised, more young people feel pressured to carry one, and the problem can spread. Instead, help normalise better choices—like looking out for each other, going to a youth club, playing football, or getting involved in something positive.

What Would You Do?

- How can you check in on your friend without making them feel judged?
- What positive alternatives could you encourage?
- Who else might be able to support them if they need help?

What You Could Say:

- "I know that was a lot—how are you feeling now?"
- "You don't have to go through this alone. I'm here if you want to talk."
- "I get why you felt like you had to carry a knife, but I don't want you to get hurt. Let's figure out a better way to handle things."
- "There are people who can help if you're feeling unsafe—have you thought about talking to someone you trust?"
- "That must have been stressful. Do you want to do something to take your mind off it?"





Talking territorialism

Some communities have very strong identities, especially in cities like Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee and in some ex-mining and fishing communities. It can feel as if you have to fight or join a gang to keep your territory safe from others. Even small areas of only a few streets can be territorial and there is often pressure to identify with these areas through 'tagging' i.e. graffiti marking out your turf, or issuing a challenge in another's turf. Sometimes this escalates into actual fighting.

Vulnerable young people can be at particular risk from joining local groups with strong territorial identities and rivalries.

Stepping up and **directly intervening** before things get really out of hand is a good move. Your friend could easily get pulled into more serious stuff. But if you act early enough you could stop a lot of trauma later on. Getting involved in gangs and violence never ends well.

Alcohol

Alcohol is indicated in 46% of all knife related crimes and spikes at weekends when drinking is more prevalent. Often these are house parties that have gotten out of control. Knives are easy to get hold of and alcohol can make people aggressive and hard to reason with. If there's tension or an argument kicks off, it can result in a fight. If you are at a party and people are edgy and getting drunk, it's safest to leave - and take your friends with you.

Gangs, violence and escalation

Involvement in gangs can escalate into criminal activity and the constant fear of violence. For a small percentage of Scotland's young people this is the harsh everyday reality.

What do you say to someone who feels that they have no choice? How do you REASSURE them that it's not normal to carry a knife when it feels like it is?

FIRSTLY: Acknowledge their 'reality'. Value their experience.

SECONDLY: Explain that this isn't everybody's experience of 'reality'. Other young people have different experiences.

THIRDLY: Ask them to think of someone they admire who is not involved in violence – a potential role model.

FOURTHLY: Offer them support to develop a non-violent lifestyle. Give them hope that a peaceful and meaningful life can be achieved and make them believe it will happen.

FIFTHLY: Extra help is available such as the Navigator Programme or Aid and Abet mentors. Or perhaps a local youth worker or trusted adult could help?

SIXTHLY: New hobbies such as football, boxing, or volunteering for a local charity can help develop new friendships and develop new skills away from gang-related activity.

Put it into practice

Here are some more scenarios to help you practice the STEPS approach.

What would you do if...

1. Your friend pulls out a knife in and says, "I'm ready if anyone starts on me."
2. Someone you know at school says they carry a knife because "everyone in the area does it."
3. You overhear a pal saying they're bringing a knife to a party for protection.
4. A friend admits they're carrying a knife because they feel pressured by their older siblings.
5. Someone in your group brags about having a knife to look tough in front of others.
6. At the bus stop, a friend shows you a knife and says it's "just in case something happens."
7. Someone your friends with posts a photo of themselves holding a knife on social media.
8. Your friend carries a knife after a fight, saying they're scared it will happen again.

Further Support

If you need further support, you can reach out to the organisations below or ask an adult about services local to you.

FEARLESS (CRIMESTOPPERS)

fearless.org

0800 555 111

An anonymous crime reporting service for young people. It also offers advice about criminality, including knife crime and resources to empower young people to make safer choices.

CREW

crew.scot

07860047501

A harm reduction and outreach charity based in Scotland. Confidential Text support service for anyone aged 13-25 (available Mon to Sat 1-5pm; 3-7pm on Thurs)

BREATHING SPACE

breathingspace.scot

0800 83 85 87

Sometimes our thoughts and feelings overwhelm us to the point where it becomes difficult to cope with everyday life. Breathing Space can give you someone to talk to when you are feeling down.

CHILDLINE

childline.org.uk

0800 1111

A free, private and confidential service for young people where you can talk about anything. Online, on the phone, anytime.

YOUNGMINDS

youngminds.org.uk

The UK's leading charity fighting for young people's mental health. Offers resources, tips, and a crisis text line for young people struggling with emotional challenges.

THE MIX

themix.org.uk

A free support service for young people under 25, offering advice on various issues, including crime, mental health, and relationships. The Mix provides a helpline, webchat, and forums for peer support.

VICTIM SUPPORT

victimsupport.org.uk

Provides free and confidential support for people affected by crime, including young people. It offers advice, advocacy, and emotional support, whether the crime is reported or not.

YouthLink Scotland
Caledonian Exchange
19A Canning Street
Edinburgh, EH3 8EG

T: 0131 313 2488
E: info@youthlink.scot
W: www.youthlink.scot

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Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot

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Valid Until
January 2024

SMALL CHARITIES